
The Literary Field of Twentieth-Century China

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The Literary Field of Twentieth-Century China

Edited by

Michel Hockx



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII PRESS
HONOLULU

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Published in North America by
University of Hawai'i Press
2840 Kolowalu Street
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96822

First Published in the United Kingdom by
Curzon Press
15 The Quadrant, Richmond
Surrey, TW9 1BP
England

Printed in Great Britain

Library of Congress Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

The literary field of twentieth-century China / edited by Michel
Hockx.

p. cm. – (Chinese worlds)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-8248-2201-3 (alk. paper). – ISBN 0-8248-2202-1 (pbk.)

1. Chinese literature–20th century–History and criticism.

2. Literature and society–China. I. Hockx, Michel. II. Title:

Literary field of 20th century China. III. Series.

PL2303.L546 1999

895.1'09005–dc21

99-22714

CIP

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Acknowledgements

The chapters of this book are based on papers presented at a workshop held in Leiden, The Netherlands in January 1996, when I was a post-doctoral fellow at the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS). The IIAS provided all the facilities and most of the funding for the workshop. Without the organisational and personal support I received from the institute and its staff members, neither the workshop nor this book would ever have materialised.

Further financial support for the workshop was granted by the Leiden University Fund.

On behalf of all contributors to this volume, I would like to thank those scholars who acted as discussants during the workshop and those whose papers, for various reasons, were not included. They are, in alphabetical order: Zong-qi Cai, Chen Xiaoming, Eva Shan Chou, Maghiel van Crevel, Douwe Fokkema, Theodore Hutters, Leo Ou-fan Lee, Perry Link, Bonnie McDougall, Wang Xiaoming, Anne Wedell-Wedellsborg, Catherine Yeh, Michelle Yeh, Henry Zhao.

During the early stages of the editing process, I received much helpful advice from Wilt Idema. The Introduction was much improved by insightful comments from Susan Daruvala and Denise Gimpel. Many remaining queries were answered by Bernhard Führer.

Yu Hong provided indispensable support in countless areas, ranging from ego boosting to hardware improvement.

Introduction

Michel Hockx

Although the word *wenxue*, as an equivalent for 'literature', does not appear in the Chinese language until the mid-nineteenth century¹, the history of Chinese literature nevertheless spans many centuries. In traditional China, the reading and writing of symbolically highly valued texts was part and parcel of the daily practice of the bearers of political and cultural power – the *wenren* or 'literati'. Text composition was a central component of the civil service examinations and there was a broad consensus about the idea that administering order and structure to texts was relevant to administering order and structure to society at large. The function of writing within the 'central tradition' is aptly summarised by Wilt Idema and Lloyd Haft:

The literature of traditional China can be described as a sort of mathematics of society. Every situation permits but one moral evaluation. With regard to any matter whatsoever, the writer's standpoint and the feelings he experiences are supposed to be entirely appropriate to the situation. The formulation of his own judgment then coincides exactly with the description of the situation; and his formulation, being the correct interpretation, shall be utterly convincing. The writer's activity can be compared to that of a scientist: the scientist applies to a given process a specific mathematical formula which is both an adequate description of the process and a demonstration of the scientist's understanding of that process. Once the scientist has come up with the proper formula, it is entirely reasonable that

he should rely on it for practical applications, and the elegant concision of the formula, recognizable as correct by others having the necessary expertise, wins confidence in its reliability. (Idema and Haft 1997: 42)

Using the terminology of Pierre Bourdieu, which will be introduced in more detail below, one could argue that, in traditional China, proficiency in text composition constituted an especially useful form of *cultural capital*, the value of which was recognised throughout society, both by those in possession of it and by those deprived of it.

Guided by the overall consensus regarding the truthfulness and usefulness of writing, members of the literati class produced an entire spectrum of literary views, which helped promote distinction amongst themselves. In his authoritative study of traditional Chinese conceptions of literature, James J.Y. Liu describes these views in the form of a circular process. Referring to the four categories considered by M.H. Abrams (1953: 6) to be the constitutive elements of every conceivable view of literature (artist, work, audience and universe), Liu claims that, in the Chinese tradition, the four are inseparable: 'reality' moves the 'poet', who produces a 'text', which affects the 'audience' that is thus moved to approach 'reality' in a different manner than before (Liu 1975:10). The six Chinese 'theories' of literature distinguished by Liu correlate to different phases within the entire process, rather than to individual elements. The lack of conflict or contradiction in Liu's representation of traditional Chinese literary conceptions all the more emphasises the strength of the consensus underlying them.

Although literati throughout the pre-modern period practised and consumed other, more culturally marginal, forms of writing (especially drama and fiction), it was not until the sixteenth century, when both the Chinese population and the economy were booming, that the values (entertainment, financial profit) and institutions (printers, publishers, bookshops) associated with these genres – and with *economic capital* – began to affect and merge with the central tradition – and with cultural capital – resulting in such splendid hybrids of 'high' and 'low' culture as *Hong lou meng* (*Red Chamber Dream*). During the nineteenth century, especially, profound changes occurred in the structure of what most contributors to the present volume will call the *literary field*: the 'interest community' of writers, publishers, book sellers, critics and educators (cf. Van Rees and Dorleijn 1993:16; Van Rees and Vermunt 1996: 319).

These changes, though not retraceable to a specific 'starting point', seem related to developments in Chinese society after the suppression of the Taiping rebellion in 1864.² Due in part to the growing pressure of Western imperialism, the Chinese elite became heavily involved in the construction of China as a modern nation-state. The education system was thoroughly reformed, leading to greater accessibility to an ever growing number of schools.³ School curricula began to emphasise practical skills, and text composition came to occupy a more modest position. Simultaneous with, and partly in reaction to, the changes in education, the printing industry went through a second period of explosive growth, this time caused by the introduction of Western printing methods, creating countless career opportunities for literates, especially in the treaty port areas.⁴

Immediately after the turn of the century, as a logical consequence of the education reforms, the system of civil service examinations was dismantled. As of that moment, the value of writing as a social currency fell even more sharply. Relations within the literary 'interest community' changed, as more and more men and women involved in writing, editing, publishing, selling and reading literary works searched for ways to re-establish cultural distinction for themselves and for their skills, within an environment that was more and more determined by the laws of economy and politics.

The title and scope of this book suggest that its contributors agree that such distinction has been achieved and maintained by the Chinese literary community throughout most of the twentieth century. Each chapter will contribute in its own way to our understanding of (part of) the modern Chinese literary field. Before introducing the individual chapters, however, there is still much ground to cover, starting with a further explanation of the notion of a 'literary field'.

The Literary Field

When the French social scientist Pierre Bourdieu⁵ first published his ideas about the structure of the literary field in modern French society, he referred to it as 'the field of cultural production, or the economic world reversed' (Bourdieu 1983). In his article, he proposed to understand the relations between members of the literary community in terms of two principles: the *autonomous* ('literary') principle and the *heteronomous* ('non-literary') principle.

He argued that community members, regardless of their specific literary views, shared the conviction that the value of a literary work was not to be found in its commercial success. This idea forms the basis of the literary field's autonomy and its distinction from other fields. On the basis of this principle, a specific type of cultural capital, which Bourdieu calls *symbolic capital*, is distributed within the field. High concentrations of symbolic capital are to be found in those parts of the field where there is a low concentration of economic capital, representing the heteronomous principle that dominates society at large. The field as a whole is positioned in the lower regions of the 'field of power', the community of society's power holders. The following illustration provides a graphical presentation of Bourdieu's main hypothesis, which he has developed over the years and which culminated in the publication of *Les règles de l'art* (*The Rules of Art*) in 1992.⁶

The figure shows that a low 'vertical' position does not automatically generate symbolic capital. Instead, the autonomous principle is introduced as a 'horizontal' element. Upon entering the field in the lower right-hand corner, i.e. devoid of both types of capital, some aspiring writers will move towards positions to their left, whereas other, so-called 'popular' authors will be upwardly mobile, meaning in this case that they remain immobile in terms of literary recognition. Established writers, occupying positions in the lower left-hand corner, will, if they are successful, move upwards to a position that is rewarding both in literary and in financial terms but exposes them to the risk of being pulled to the right of the field.

EC = Economic Capital
SC = Symbolic Capital

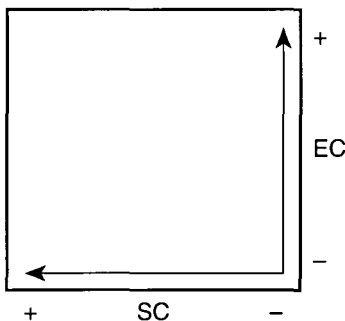


Figure 1: Forces in the literary field

Sociologists of literature have also investigated the positions, mobility and mutual relations of other agents within the field, such as publishers and critics. In *The Rules of Art*, Bourdieu discusses the position of the publisher as 'mediator' between the field's two principles. He also looks at the connection between the reputation of publishing houses and the proportion of highly valued 'classical' works that they publish. At Tilburg University in The Netherlands, a unique database of newspaper reviews of literary works over a period of ten years has been built up, on the basis of which Van Rees and Vermunt have established linear relationships between the number of reviews in leading newspapers of literary work by debutants, the publishing house where the work was published and the debutants' chances to publish a second book.⁷

Analysis of the structure of the field and its positions is only one angle from which a sociology of literature might proceed. Another area of interest is the activity of individual agents and their ways of dealing with the field's main principles. Bourdieu has maintained, in a number of publications, that the analysis of the position of the literary field within the field of power should precede the analysis of the positions within the field itself and that the latter should again precede the analysis of individual agency. I disagree with this linear methodology, which seems to have little in common with Bourdieu's general tendency to approach social processes as 'circles', without wanting to establish beginnings and endings. In my opinion, it is more rewarding to carry out research simultaneously in all three areas.

In the example above, for instance, it would be a mistake to imagine that successful writers are immune to the influence of economic capital. It would be more correct to say that they have found a way of dealing with the heteronomous principle that leaves the impression that they are indifferent to it. For the more successful agents, this 'cover-up strategy' is not a conscious strategy at all. It is their 'feel for the field', what Bourdieu calls 'the practical sense' or *habitus*, that underlies their actions. Finding out how this sense is achieved, understanding how it operates and describing the agency resulting from it, are all crucial steps towards comprehending the field in its entirety. Or, to turn things around, one can only prove the existence of a 'literary field' if one can establish that literary success relies on skills and sensitivities that differ significantly from those needed to achieve success in other fields. If the reality of literary practice consisted of direct reflections of structures or forces that exist

elsewhere in society, there would be little reason to consider the phenomenon in isolation. As can easily be observed, however, in many modern societies 'having what it takes' to become, say, a successful business person, does mean having something very different from what it takes to become a successful literary writer.

Although the concept of class is relevant to the analysis of habitus, it is worth pointing out that Bourdieu considers habitus to be something much more than 'class background', especially since he suggests that an agent's habitus changes when that agent becomes active within a certain field. In learning to play by the rules of the field, the agent incorporates some of those rules and eventually ceases to be consciously aware of abiding by them, or indeed of changing them. Like other elements of habitus, class background can play a helpful role during the initial stages of an agent's career within the field, but ultimate success depends on sensibilities that can only be developed over time, during a prolonged period of interaction between the agent's 'disposition' and the position or positions that she or he occupies.

As is pointed out in an excellent critical study of Bourdieu's cultural theory by Bridget Fowler, the application of the concept of habitus to the study of art and literature is probably Bourdieu's most original contribution to existing theory:

Bourdieu's originality lies less in linking the origins of modernist literature to the external determinants of the writers than in introducing the concept of artistic habitus, or learnt dispositions, through which artists expressed their social position in a distinctive artistic philosophy or set of meanings. [. . .] The key difference he claims from earlier writers is that the objective conditions are not simply a product of external class position but are also shaped by the agents of the independent yet dominated world of art, with their commitments, alliances, competitive anxieties and interests [. . .]. Paramount among their concerns are also the interests of a more educated group. Their disdain for the social exclusivity of the dominant classes masks their retention of the privileges conferred by a superior education. (Fowler 1997:77)

In arguing for an understanding of the behaviour of cultural producers in the context of the conditions that they themselves help create, that make sense to them and that they take very seriously, even if they fail to grasp them *objectively* or *structurally*, Bourdieu not only

dismisses the structuralism of Lévi-Strauss, but also, as Fowler demonstrates, 'the alternatives to this position, by which I mean the "rational choice" theory of Elster, or, earlier, the Sartrean ideas of "authentic action" or good and bad faith.' (ibid.: 19) In literary studies, one might add, Bourdieu's ideas offer an attractive way out of the age-old conflict between 'intrinsic' and 'extrinsic' approaches without having to revert to political criticism or cultural relativism. The strong emphasis on observation, understanding, and 'reflexivity' (i.e. the need for researchers to recognise and objectify their own 'blind spots') seems particularly promising for work in a cross-cultural context.

Institutions

Apart from individual agency, literary institutions are also observable elements of literary practice and the study of literary institutions can significantly further our understanding of a given literary field. The literary sociologist Kees van Rees distinguishes two types of literary institution: those that are mainly involved in material production and distribution (the making and selling of the book) and those that are mainly involved in symbolic production (the making of the book's value). The first category includes writers, publishers and book sellers; the second literary critics, educators and academics. The number of institutions and their respective functions may differ from time to time and from society to society. Van Rees has developed a schematic form of representation of literary institutions and their mutual relations, an example of which, based on the contemporary situation in many West-European countries, is reproduced below.⁸

The lines representing links and relations between the various institutions are essential to the characterisation of this scheme as a 'literary field'. If this mutual dependence were non-existent (for instance because all institutions were totally dependent on a *maecenas*, or a government), then the relevance of isolating the phenomena should again be seriously questioned. It seems to me that this form of representation has considerable cross-cultural potential, since it does not base itself on a subjective understanding of what literature is or should be, but rather on the objective observation that a phenomenon called 'literature' (or *wenxue* or whatever) exists in many societies and that it incorporates institutions which can be described. The next question is one of method: how is the literary field (in this case the literary field of twentieth-century China), its

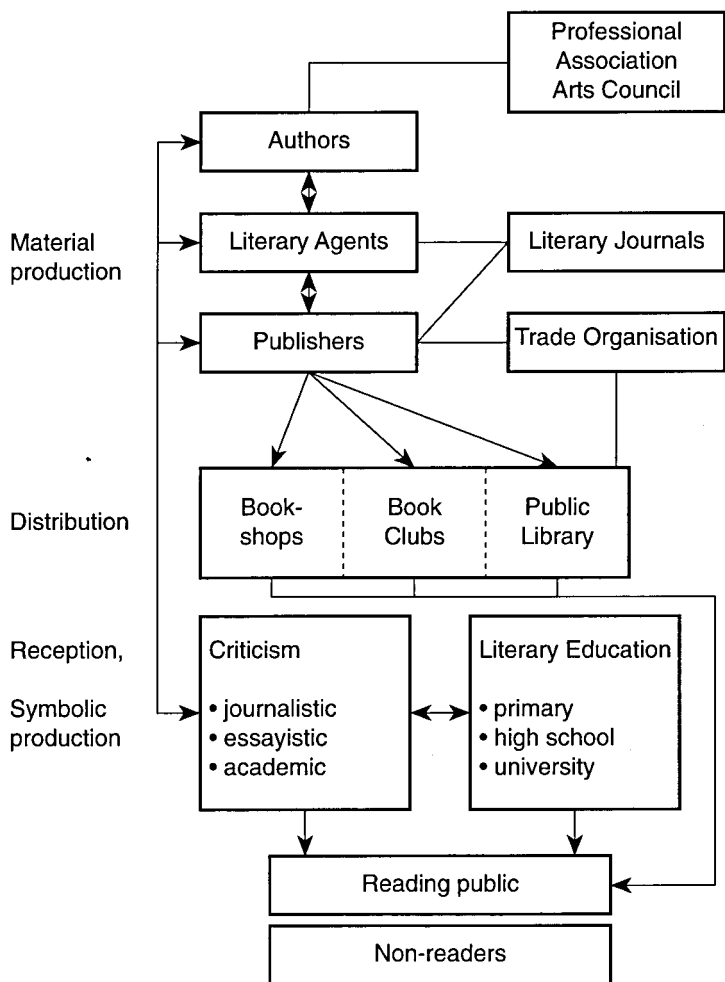


Figure 2: Institutions of the literary field in West-European countries (Van Rees and Vermunt 1996: 320)

principles and its institutions best described? The present volume can offer only tentative answers to this question, which will be introduced below.

First, however, I would like to provide a more encompassing definition of the literary field, based on what has been said above:

The literary field is an interest community of agents and institutions involved in the material and symbolic production of literature, whose activities are governed by at least one autonomous principle that is fully or partially at odds with at least one heteronomous principle.

Studying modern Chinese literary practice as a 'field'

In *The Rules of Art*, Bourdieu used his own theory to describe the development of the French literary field from the mid-nineteenth century to the present, paying special attention to the role of Gustave Flaubert, whom he regards as the instigator of developments leading to the emergence of the first real 'literary field' in the history of French society. That Bourdieu denies the existence of literary fields before the advent of Flaubert is confusing and, in my view, unnecessary, because it creates the impression that the only true literary fields are those in which the two main principles are the symbolic and the economical.⁹ As Bourdieu's pupil Alain Viala has shown in *Naissance de l'écrivain (Birth of the Writer)* (Viala 1985), it is possible to describe earlier French fields within the same framework. In the case of Chinese literature, there can be even less doubt about the feasibility of such investigations, as the early flourishing of printing and publishing in China must certainly make it possible to describe an 'interest community' of writers, publishers, book sellers and critics as early as the Ming dynasty. It is likely that the analysis of such a field, which I shall not attempt here, would focus on the tension between an autonomous principle of literary value and a heteronomous principle of political usefulness. It could be supported by case studies outlining the careful manoeuvring by literati in search of both a literary and a political career.

The literary communities that are at the focus of attention of this book began to take shape, as mentioned above, during the second half of the nineteenth century. This means that the period covered here is roughly equal to that covered by Bourdieu in *The Rules of Art*, but that is where the resemblance ends. This book does not intend to outline a neat development of Chinese literary practice from sub-field to dualistically structured field to 'market of symbolic goods'. Rather, each individual contribution highlights specific elements of that practice. The first four chapters deal with the field before the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, while the

last four chapters address the situation after that date, especially after 1978.¹⁰ In between is the central Chapter Five, by Chen Pingyuan, who brings the two periods together, looking back on a century of Chinese fiction, its writers and their practices. Together, the nine chapters provide new insights into the underlying continuities of Chinese literature from the present (almost past) century: horizontal and vertical ties of allegiance (*guanxi*), the utilisation of ‘the people’ and the appropriation of ‘the West’. Other recognisable aspects of the field’s continuity are its institutions (literary societies and unions, literary publishing houses, literature departments of universities, the institution of translation), its media (literary books, journals and series), its agents (writers, editors, publishers, critics, censors), its language (the vernacular or *baihua*) and its genres (fiction, poetry, drama, essay, theory). In isolation, none of these elements are distinctively modern or distinctively Chinese, but in their totality they are both.

Ties of allegiance

Bourdieu usually defines the concept of ‘field’ as ‘a space of relations between positions’, emphasising that only related individuals and institutions can make up a field. It is not surprising that some of these relations can take the shape of ties of allegiance, covering all the connotations of the Chinese word *guanxi*. It seems normal that aspiring authors, for instance, rely to some extent on *guanxi* with other authors, with publishers or with critics, to advance their careers within the field, even if this is not done consciously. Some chapters of this book describe types of *guanxi* that are less obvious to the outside observer but nevertheless play, and have played, crucial roles in the careers of modern Chinese authors.

In Chapter Three, I discuss the roles of writers, editors and publishers as ‘positions’ within the sub-field of high literature during the 1920s. I find that there are two types of allegiance influencing the behaviour of young authors, namely ‘vertical’ allegiance to a literary idol who is considered one’s ‘teacher’ (*shisheng guanxi* or ‘teacher–student relations’) and ‘horizontal’ allegiance to members of a literary club, society or association (*tongren guanxi* or ‘peer relations’). Advantages of the teacher–student relation included, for the student, having one’s writings edited by an experienced writer, being introduced to a publisher, receiving favourable reviews or being defended against bad reviews. The teachers were perceived to benefit

from the relation in that it enabled them to build up a 'school' of followers.

Peer relations are of tremendous importance to the understanding of modern Chinese literature, as there is hardly any period during the twentieth century in which literary figures were not, either voluntarily or forcibly, tied to one or more collective organisations. In Chapter Three, I look specifically at how the founding of literary societies became an established mode of behaviour within the literary field of the 1920s and the consequences of this phenomenon for developments in literary publishing.

Chapter Four, by Raoul Findeisen, is called 'From Literature to Love: Glory and Decline of the Love-Letter Genre'. As the title indicates, Findeisen's focus is on the literary representation of *qingren guanxi* or 'lover relations'. The *qingshu* (love-letter) genre may have been a short-lived genre, but for a brief period of time during the late 1920s and early 1930s, it was an extremely popular type of writing and collections of love-letters were published by many well-known writers, including, of course, Lu Xun himself. Findeisen demonstrates that for many 'literary couples', the publication of a volume of love-letters not only served the purpose of legitimising or celebrating their relationship, but also that of furthering their participation and status in the literary field. Simultaneously, the genre as a whole and the public attention it attracted were instrumental in raising the status of *baihua* writing and writers within modern Chinese culture and society. As the genre developed, the two motivations ('literature for love's sake' and 'love for literature's sake') were turned into opposing principles, the former being the autonomous principle of 'pure' or 'high' love-letter writing, claimed by Lu Xun and others, while the latter was considered a 'vulgar' or 'low' variety of the genre. In his analysis of love-letter collections and their constitutive relationships, Findeisen also pays attention to role play between partners, in which the 'teacher-student relationship' is again operative.

Claire Huot, in the closing chapter, sketches the career trajectory of successful Chinese writers of the 1990s as a form of upward mobility through four cultural communities: the national literary institutional world; the local artistic community (mainly Beijing); the transnational cultural industry and the multinational cultural industry. The title of the chapter, 'Here, There, Anywhere: Networking by Young Chinese Writers Today', touches upon the idea of *guanxi*, although the 'networks' described by Huot are altogether more fluid spaces, populated by avant-garde writers, theatre and movie directors, literary

agents, foreign publishers and festival organisers whose mutual relations depend more on economic and artistic ties than on ties of personal allegiance. Her case study of the poet Yu Jian's striking international literary success, reflected in his own physical mobility (travel) and the geographical mobility of his work (translation) and expressed in an improvement of both his symbolic and material status, also takes into account the avant-garde quality of his work, which has remained stable throughout his development.

Utilisation of 'the people'

To my mind, the main reason why modern Chinese literary practice does not allow itself to be schematised as easily in terms of only two conflicting principles, the way Bourdieu described modern French literary practice, is the presence of a third principle, partly but not fully heteronomous, which motivates modern Chinese writers to consider, *as part of their practice*, the well-being of their country and their people. It would be incorrect to view this 'political principle' as part of the autonomous principle, for two reasons: first, because overly utilitarian writing has never been accorded high literary value by the Chinese literary community and, second, because 'politically correct' writers can be upwardly mobile in terms of 'political capital' *within* the field, even if they are immobile in terms of 'symbolic capital'. An unrespected writer (Xiang Deyan) was a powerful literary censor under the Guomindang, a mediocre poet (He Jingzhi) became Minister of Culture under the CCP. It cannot be denied that they occupied positions in the literary field, nor can the influence of the principles they represented be disregarded. What *can* be said is that in this case, too, the most acclaimed literary producers are those who seemingly effortlessly combine 'literary excellence' with political efficacy and economic success, while never giving the impression that they sacrificed the first principle for the other two, or the second for the third. The best example is the writer who, perhaps exactly for these reasons, is considered to be modern China's finest: Lu Xun.

As several chapters in this book make clear, the ability to deal with the concept of 'the people' is an important strategy in the arsenal of the successful modern Chinese writer. In the opening chapter, Wang-chi Wong demonstrates how late-Qing and early Republican reformers used translations of Western fiction to further their own political purposes. In order to do this, Wong argues, the translators carried out a twofold 'act of violence'. First of all, they violently

opened up a space for their translations within their own culture by claiming that no indigenous form of writing could serve and elevate 'the people' the way that Western fiction could. Second, they violated the original Western texts by manipulating them in such a way that their content would be acceptable for the *élite*. Using concepts from translation theory, Wong points out that in both cases the needs of the 'receptor party' were considered far more important than faithfulness to the 'source'. In the end, the role of these 'translations' was the establishment of authority and power of a group of agents with specific social, political *and* literary ambitions.

In Chapter Five, Chen Pingyuan continues the story where Wong left it, by analysing the literary successes of the *next* generation of reformers, the advocates of the so-called 'New Culture Movement'. Chen convincingly shows that these reformers' advocacy of *baihua*, which they claimed would bring literature closer to 'the people', was really only a convenient strategic argument. Their obvious rejection of the Chinese tradition of fiction, in which they now *included* the attempts at literary reform by their direct predecessors, and their own literary tastes and standards leave no doubt about their literary elitism. Chen shows that the dividing line between 'popular' or 'low' fiction and 'literary' or 'high' fiction was not simply a reflection of the difference between the 'Chinese' and the 'Western' or the 'traditional' and the 'modern'. Instead, the distinction was one of social status. Coining the concept 'cultural character' (*wenhua pingge*), Chen outlines what might be called the *habitus* of, on the one hand, university professors from Beijing and, on the other hand, intellectuals working in the publishing industry in Shanghai. The former were financially independent, could fund their own literary journals on a non-profit basis and disseminated their literary values among the intellectual *élite* very rapidly through their textbooks and lectures. The latter were financially dependent, needed to be more aware of the market for their literary products and had no means of influencing the intellectual *élite*. Chen demonstrates that the complete success of the 'professors' is most strongly reflected in the self-humiliation of writers like Zhang Henshui and Bao Tianxiao, who ended up readily admitting to their being 'only' writers of 'popular fiction' and, through their recognition of it, affirmed the 'symbolic capital' of 'high' literature. At the beginning and end of the chapter, Chen extends his arguments to the contemporary era, examining a recent debate over the literary status of the martial-arts fiction writer Jin Yong.

Chapter Six, written by Marja Kaikkonen, nicely complements Chen Pingyuan's analysis of the low symbolic value of popular fiction by studying the economic and political successes of contemporary China's two largest popular fiction journals: *Gushihui* (*Story Session*) and *Jin gu chuanqi* (*Legends Old and New*). Based on an inspection of the contents of the journals as well as on interviews with those in charge of running and marketing them, Kaikkonen demonstrates that Chinese popular fiction from the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s represents a very rich body of writing, which comprises its own sub-genres and its own theory. In comparison with the Western situation, more elements of non-popular writing are included in what is called 'popular fiction' (*tongsu xiaoshuo*) in contemporary China. The 'stories and legends' are not always formulaic, nor are they always written with the aim to entertain. They carry didactic and political value, while their economic success has won them the support of the authorities.

In conclusion, Kaikkonen articulates an assumption similar to what Chen Pingyuan argued for the situation of the 1920s: that the term 'popular literature', with all its negative connotations, is used strategically by the intellectual élite in order to gain power and authority over a commercially successful 'middle class'. In the 1920s, the élite's ties with the education system (and, I would add, political institutions) guaranteed their success. In the 1990s, the support that the 'middle class' obtains from political quarters may lead to a different outcome. This is likely to exacerbate the strategic attacks on 'popular culture' by Chinese intellectuals, whose position within the literary field and a number of corresponding cultural fields is at stake. It is not unlikely that we shall soon see Chinese intellectuals 'going to the people' once again.

Appropriation of 'the West'

No one has ever been able to deny that twentieth-century Chinese literature was tremendously influenced by foreign literature. This influence is often conveniently, though inaccurately, summarised as coming from 'the West', even though much of it came from Japan in the first half of this century and from Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union in the second half, i.e. from countries whose intellectual or political cultures and systems bore strong similarities to those of China at the time the influence took place. Recent years have seen high-flown debates about the nature of the Western impact and its relation to imperialism. Important as these debates are, they have not

barred scholars from pursuing other lines of inquiry and, as this book and many others show, they have also not hampered communication between Chinese and Western scholars.

Though the study of the influence of Western literary texts and critical discourse on modern Chinese literature is well developed¹¹, the role of foreign models in the shaping of literary practice, for instance in the behaviour of writers, publishers and book sellers, has not been very well studied to date, with one eminent exception: Leo Lee's *The Romantic Generation of Modern Chinese Writers* (Lee 1973). Lee devoted his opening chapters to an analysis of the Republican-era literary scene (*wentan*) and its constitutive 'aggregates', before turning to case studies of modern Chinese writers who, in one way or other, had incorporated the nineteenth-century European 'romantic temperament' into their life-styles. As far as I know, no similar attempts have been made by scholars after Lee for the same or any other period, at least not by scholars publishing in English. In Chinese scholarship, much more work has been done in this area, as indeed the entire study of literary practice is much more elaborately covered in Chinese-language publications. Chinese scholars have compiled and published numerous reference works providing *yanjiu ziliao* (research materials) on modern writers, groups or schools and a serial publication like *Xin wenxue shiliao* (*Historical Materials for New Literature*) has been a gold mine for sociologists of literature for decades. Author dictionaries (*zuojia cidian*) and pen-name lists (*biming lu*) refer to hundreds of known and unknown authors, providing the quantifiable data that are indispensable to the kind of research suggested here. Moreover, the strong Marxist influence on PRC scholarship has always secured an interest in the social dimension of literature, while in recent times, less clearly Marxist sociologies of modern Chinese literature have also been published.¹² For the post-1949 period, this kind of material has also been gathered and partly published.¹³

All contributors to this book make references to foreign elements in modern Chinese literary practice in one way or other, but the chapters discussed below study this dimension in some detail. In Chapter Two, Denise Gimpel takes stock of translations of Western texts published in the pages of the journal *Xiaoshuo yuebao* (*The Short Story Monthly*) in the early 1910s, i.e. before this well-known journal was taken over by the advocates of 'new literature'. Gimpel shows that historical events and debates taking place in China and among Chinese intellectuals at the time constitute the most important criteria for

the selection of texts for translation. Gimpel's observations are of extra significance for the study of the modern Chinese literary field as they radically challenge the commonly held view that *Xiaoshuo yuebao*, before its take-over by the 'new culture', was a journal of the 'Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies' school, and therefore aimed mainly at entertainment (cf. Link 1981). Although it has been argued before (especially by Rey Chow (1990)) that the attacks by 'new culture' intellectuals on fiction journals such as *Xiaoshuo yuebao* have curbed the development and distorted critical judgment of this genre of modern Chinese literature, Gimpel is, to my knowledge, the first to come up with concrete evidence for this assumption. At the same time, her findings about these journals' appropriation of Western culture do not support Rey Chow's claim that this type of writing represents a more 'Chinese' form of 'modernity'. The 1910s, then, remain a vastly underresearched period in twentieth-century Chinese literature.

In Chapter Seven, Oliver Krämer approaches Chinese writers' dealings with the West from a completely different perspective. Looking at the contemporary journal of Chinese 'exile' literature *Jintian (Today)*, Krämer tentatively presents 'a sociology of Chinese writers in exile', based on interviews with the editors and main contributors to the journal and an analysis of its readership. In an approach that is methodologically similar to Bourdieu's, Krämer's interviews allow the agents to speak for themselves, adding individual overtones to his larger generalisations about Chinese writing in exile. The chapter adequately illustrates the problems of discussing 'Western influence' on modern Chinese literature solely on the basis of textual contact. Many of the writers interviewed by Krämer were, when still in China, representatives of 'Western' literary tastes and sensitivities, but living abroad, these do not seem to facilitate their establishment within the literary fields of their new communities, nor success among new readerships. At the same time, Krämer does not observe any tendencies to shape a collective 'group', 'school' or even 'field' of Chinese exile literature.

Among the nine contributors to this book, Wendy Larson, who wrote Chapter Eight, is most critical of Bourdieu's framework. Studying the field of film, Larson shows that the economic principle is much more dominant in that area of cultural production. She further points out that films made in the Third World are even more dominated by the principle, as they require First World financial backing in order to be successful. Taking Zhang Yimou's movie *Huozhe (To Live)* as an example in point, the character played by

Gong Li is shown to be based on a ‘double habitus’, attractive and recognisable to both Western and Chinese viewers. Though the film treats some of the most turbulent events in modern Chinese political history, Larson argues, it manages to ‘displace’ the political element in favour of traditional Chinese cultural values and values of Western consumer culture. Thus Larson’s contribution, in its own way, confirms the hypothesis that modern Chinese literary practice is structured around three principles, each pulling the individual agents in different directions: the literary, the political and the economical. As a conclusion, this hypothesis can be schematised as a ‘force field’, as in Figure 1, but with one added dimension (see Figure 3).

Field elements

Another way to classify the nine chapters of this book is by looking at their contributions to the study of modern Chinese literary institutions and other field elements. So far, the study of modern Chinese literature has maintained an understandable preference for research into creative and critical texts and their authors. Although most literature scholars would agree that modes of production and consumption of literature differ from society to society and that it is therefore important to understand not only the meaning of a text but also the way in which the text was written, published, sold and read,

EC = Economic Capital

SC = Symbolic Capital

PC = Political Capital

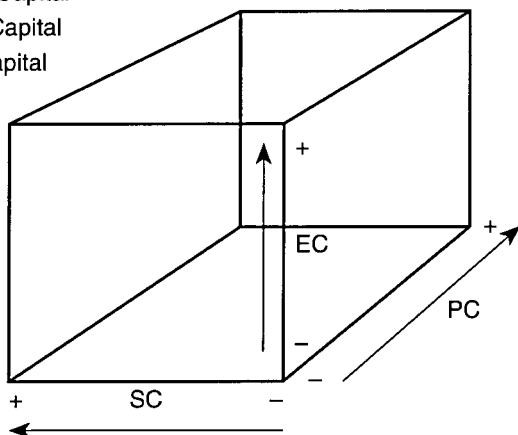


Figure 3: Forces in the modern Chinese literary field

there are far too few studies of these processes for any period of China's modern history. There has been no systematic study of the institution of translation, addressed by Wang-chi Wong in Chapter One. Literary journals, like the one described by Denise Gimpel in Chapter Two, have been the main avenue of literary publication during the entire twentieth century in China. So many of the major works of modern Chinese literature, including many long novels, were and still are published (in instalments) in literary journals before they come out in book form, yet there has been little consideration of the way in which this influences writing and reading habits.¹⁴ Literary societies, treated in Chapter Three, have been studied before, especially for the 1920s, but the larger significance of the persistence of forms of collective organisation for modern Chinese literature is still not entirely clear, despite the pioneering efforts by Wang Xiaoming (1991, 1996). Genres that were obviously popular and valued at times and that were instrumental in determining relations within the literary field, such as the *qingshu* genre examined in Chapter Four, still remain at the periphery of scholarship. The role played by education and academia in the symbolic production of literature, which stands out so clearly in Chapter Five, is hardly ever touched upon, perhaps because it leads to questions about our own practice, which we might find difficult to answer. Commercial 'popular fiction' journals, such as the two journals studied in Chapter Six are studied by some for their contents, but in this case, too, a closer look at the way in which the journals are run can be highly illuminating. The study of exchanges and transactions between national and international fields of literature and film and the individuals, institutions and communities involved in those transactions, treated in Chapters Seven, Eight and Nine, has hardly yet begun.¹⁵

Perhaps there will come a time when it will be possible to fit the above-mentioned 'field elements' into a scheme resembling Figure 2, outlining the various institutions of material and symbolic production of literature and their mutual relations. It is likely that different schemes must be drawn up for different periods, but a more general, overall scheme for the twentieth century in modern Chinese literary practice, should, I think, *at least* take into account collective literary organisations (societies, associations, unions) and collective literary publications (journals, supplements, series). It should also include, in one way or other, the institution of *guanxi* and the institution of *the people*, as well as a general institution labelled *The West* or *translation*.

And it should include political institutions, especially censorship, as the presence of censors in the literary field has been one of the most stable factors of Chinese literary practice, even if it is not treated as such in this book.¹⁶

In the long run, I do not envisage any immediate changes in the priorities (one would be tempted to say 'the habitus') of literature scholars as a result of the development of theories like Bourdieu's. The literary text and its authors will remain the central focus of scholars' attention for decades to come. The purpose of this book and of other, similar studies, is to complement, not to replace. Scholars who are not interested in what they consider to be the 'context' of modern Chinese literature will hopefully still resort to this book as a source of information, as the various chapters present large amounts of new source materials that are well worth noting. All chapters of this book have been written with the specific aim to provide their readers with a more thorough understanding of certain parts of modern Chinese literary practice, not to prove a theoretical point or to introduce new jargon. As such, it is hoped that the book will also be useful for students at all levels. In the final analysis, I believe this book, as a whole, lives up to the stern demand made on us by Bourdieu in the following passage:

The theory of the field leads to both a rejection of the direct relating of individual biography to the work of literature (or the relation of the "social class" of origin to the work) and also to a rejection of internal analysis of an individual work or even of intertextual analysis. This is because what we have to do is all these things at the same time. (Bourdieu 1993:9)

Notes

- 1 Cf. Liu 1995: 34–5.
- 2 Historians of China will probably never agree on an answer to the question of when the country became 'modern'. However, in recent years there seems to be a growing consensus about the idea that this modernity was not just the result of, or a reaction to, Western interference, but also of internal developments. In general, historians seem to agree that the quelling of the Taiping rebellion and the ensuing reconstruction were important catalysts for those internal developments. See especially Cohen 1984.
- 3 Bourdieu (1983:318) holds that education plays a 'decisive role' in popularising (he uses the word 'imposing') ways in which literature is

- consumed. The link between the new Chinese education system and the literary field will emerge as one of the central themes of this book. It is addressed in Chapters Three and Four and discussed in detail in Chapter Five.
- 4 For an overview of some of these developments in relationship to literature, see Lee and Nathan 1985. For a comprehensive treatment of all late-Qing reforms, see Reynolds 1993. For education reforms in specific, see Bastid 1988.
- 5 Good general introductions to Bourdieu's work are Robbins 1991 and Jenkins 1992. A more critical view is presented in Calhoun *et al.* 1993. Fowler 1997 is an excellent discussion of Bourdieu's cultural theory.
- 6 Adapted from Bourdieu 1983: 319.
- 7 See Van Rees and Vermunt 1996.
- 8 Van Rees's scheme plays an important role in a (as far as I know) unique research project currently being carried out in The Netherlands, in which a group of researchers at the postgraduate and postdoctoral level study different literatures in different historical periods, each attempting to establish a similar schematic representation of their own 'field'. See Van Rees and Dorleijn 1993.
- 9 In Chapter Eight of this book, Wendy Larson uses the example of film to discuss a number of problems in Bourdieu's work, including his reluctance to accept fields in which the role of 'symbolic capital' is less dominant.
- 10 The exclusion of the period 1949–1978 is, admittedly, unfortunate as I have no intention to argue that there was no literary field in China during that period. On the contrary, the period offers fascinating perspectives for the study of literary fields embedded in political structures. Chung 1996 sheds some light on this period, but more research is needed to establish the extent to which an autonomous literary principle continued to be valid during these decades and what kind of principle that was. Surely, the literary interest community was not entirely defunct during those years, even if it took its orders from whoever was leading the socio-political campaigns.
- 11 Liu 1995 is a massive contribution to this area.
- 12 A good example is Luan 1992.
- 13 For instance, the above-mentioned journal *Xin wenxue shiliao* has recently begun including material on literature from the 1950s.
- 14 In Hockx 1998c, a tentative approach is made to read one early modern Chinese poem and one short story in their original journal context.
- 15 A good pioneering effort, also influenced by Bourdieu, is Andrew Jones 1994.
- 16 Part of the reason for this is that the institution of censorship, unlike other institutions, has been studied extensively. For the pre-1949 period see Ting 1974, Lin Yutang 1937 and Hockx 1998a. For post-1949 see articles by Michael Schoenhals and Bonnie McDougall in Whitfield 1993.

Chapter One _____

An Act of Violence

Translation of Western fiction in the late Qing
and early Republican period

Wang-chi Wong

In his preface to his son's Shakespeare translations, Victor Hugo wrote:

When you offer a translation to a nation, that nation will almost always look on the translation as an act of violence against itself. [. . .] To translate a foreign writer is to add to your own national poetry; such a widening of the horizon does not please those who profit from it, at least not in the beginning. The first reaction is one of rebellion. [. . .] Who could ever dare think of infusing the substance of another people into its own very life-blood? (Lefevre 1992: 18)

From Hugo's point of view, a translation was often *received* as an act of violence, as it would constitute a threat to existing literature in the reception culture and hence a threat to those who had benefited or were then benefiting from their control of the existing literature. On the other hand, however, translation can in some cases also be purposefully turned into an act of violence by the translators to serve special, usually political purposes. It can be made into an innovative, if not a subversive, force to overthrow the long-established literary 'norm', in order to bring in new elements that might fit into the translators' agenda and contribute to its advancement. In this article, I analyse the translation of foreign fiction in China during the late Qing and early Republican Period from the above two points of view: that it was received as an act of violence and that it was manipulated as an act of violence. In both cases, I shall argue, emphasis was laid on the translations and the receptor party, rather than on the originals and the source.

The rise of translation

Translation has a long history in China. With its vast area and a large number of races, China had been conducting translation among the different peoples within her own boundaries since the early Zhou, long before the *guilao* ('foreign devils') came to pay tribute to the Imperial State. Nevertheless, throughout history, there were frequent intrusions of cultures from outside China. The import of Buddhism, started from as early as 122 BC, was by far the most important. For its part, Christianity was first introduced into China in the Tang period.¹ Both made a tremendous impact on Chinese culture.

Before the last decade of the nineteenth century, however, translation of foreign literature was never recognised as an important enterprise in China. This situation is easy to explain. For centuries, China had held, at least the Chinese so believed, an undisputed supremacy in literature and culture over other countries. That was why she was able to assimilate Buddhism without any great difficulty; even Christianity, when it was first brought into China, met little opposition, as the Chinese were confident enough that foreign cultures would not constitute any threat and could be absorbed easily. It was in the final years of the Qing Dynasty that the Chinese began a large-scale translation campaign of Western literature.

The year 1842, in which China was, for the first time, defeated by a Western power, in the First Opium War, has often been taken as a turning point in Chinese political history, after which she was said to have entered into a new era, the 'early modern' period (*jindai*). The defeat in the Second Opium War confirmed unmistakably that China did not possess sufficient military strength to fight the foreigners. Progressive gentry began to call for reform, and they started to realise the importance of translation in order to bring in 'the strong points of barbarians to control the barbarians'. Nevertheless, at this initial stage, what they wanted to learn from the West was mainly on the military side, such as the building of battleships, the use of guns and at most, the training of armies. Although a number of Western works were translated and there was even the establishment of government translation organs such as the Tongwenguan, people paid no attention to literature, and the three main categories of works translated during this time were religious writings, books on sciences and applied sciences, and books on history, politics and laws (Hu 1993: 106). Within the 60 years between 1840–1898, only seven titles of Western literature were

translated into Chinese and they made no great impact on the Chinese minds (Chen 1989: 24).

However, the defeat by Japan in the Sino-Japanese war of 1895 dealt the most severe blow to the confidence of the Chinese. Many began to realise that superficial reforms would not save the country. They demanded a reform not only on the military side, but also in the subtle aspects of thinking. Reformers began to look to literature, or more specifically, to foreign literature, as a powerful means to change the minds of the nation. In the last decade of the Manchu rule, there was a sudden surge in the translation of foreign fiction. According to one source, in 1903, 44 pieces of foreign fiction were translated, compared with only eight in the previous year. This figure continued to grow and reached highs in 1906 and 1907, with 110 and 126 titles respectively (Chen 1989: 42).

The political factor was a very important cause for the increase of translation activities in that period, and this will be a central point of attention in the discussion below. Nevertheless, there were, by all means, other factors that contributed to the sudden surge in the translation of foreign fiction. One that cannot be neglected is the economic consideration. With the establishment of coastal city ports, hence, the building up of a large city population, there was a rise of readership, which brought about and supported many new magazines and newspapers. While there were only eight newspapers in China within the 46 years of the period 1815–1861, there were 78 newspapers and magazines in 1886 and 124 in 1901 (Chen 1989: 66). After the publication of *Xin xiaoshuo* (*New Fiction*) in 1902, more and more magazines and newspapers bore *xiaoshuo* in their titles and published mainly, if not only, fiction. Added to this was the establishment of the royalty system, which produced a group of professional translators, writers and editors, the first time ever in Chinese literary history. As their fortunes depended largely on the marketability of their works, they had to take the tastes of the readers into serious consideration when choosing subject matter to write on or a piece of foreign fiction to translate. Apart from the content, their way of writing and translating was also much affected by the aesthetic tastes of the readers. Unfortunately, political considerations and economic interests did not always go hand in hand. Lin Shu's translation of *Les dame aux camelias* did not fit into any political agenda (at the time, he was mourning the death of his wife), but it was no doubt the best-selling piece of work of the time. So, even though for a time fiction with strong political flavours, particularly the

so-called political novels, was very popular, when the political sentiments subsided, readers would prefer to read works that were not simply educational but were more entertaining and interesting. Hence, while the deliberate 'act of violence' might serve well the political purposes of the translators, they had to be careful not to alienate the readers with works that were unacceptable, both aesthetically and culturally, in the market.

The translator-reformers and their tactics

Traditional Chinese literary criticism often emphasised the influence of literature on society. Men of letters were urged to make the best use of literature to improve politics. Hence a utilitarian approach to literature was by no means unknown to the Chinese. But there was one big difference in the late Qing: the use of the genre 'fiction'. In the past, fiction never enjoyed any important place in the world of 'orthodox' literature. Fiction and novel writers were not respectable, as they were not included in the Nine Schools (*jiuliu*) and no 'great' man of letters would ever write fiction or take up fiction as a means to improve society.

However, Liang Qichao, no doubt the single most important intellectual of the late Qing, saw an incredible power in fiction for influencing the general masses. Upon the failure of the Hundred Days Reform (11th June–21st Sept 1898) and the attempt to get rid of the powerful Empress Dowager, Liang, having fled to Japan, began to turn to the people to strengthen the nation at the grass-roots level, despite the fact that he was then still a royalist who believed in reforms rather than revolution. He urged, in order to save the nation, to transform the people (*xinmin*). But how? To Liang, the solution lay in fiction. In the essay 'Lun xiaoshuo yu qunzhi zhi guanxi' (On the Relationship between Fiction and the Government of the People), which can probably be regarded as one of Liang's most important pieces of writing, he categorically spelt out that '[. . .] to renovate the people of a nation, one must first renovate its fiction' because he saw in fiction 'a profound power over the way of man'. He even claimed that fiction was the most important among all literary genres (Liang 1902a; Denton 1996: 74–81).

For several reasons, this argument was soon taken up and accepted by many people, even though they might belong to different political camps. First, before Liang, reformists like Kang Youwei (1897: 11–12), Yan Fu and Xia Zengyou (1897: 12) had already vaguely

expressed similar ideas. They had provided the general climate for Liang to make a more vigorous proclamation. Second, as said earlier, traditional literary critics had also advocated the use of literature to improve politics. Third, traditional critics also admitted the influence of fiction on the masses. But to them, all such influences were bad, as traditional fiction and novels only 'propagated sex and violence' (*huiyin huida*). Liang also agreed with this. On a number of occasions, he and his followers severely criticised traditional fiction and novels, including those that are now considered great works such as *Shuihu zhuan* (*The Water Margin*) and *Honglou meng* (*Red Chamber Dream*). But Liang wisely turned the table by saying that if there could be a new kind of fiction, a good influence could come out of it (Liang 1902a: 36–7). In a time when people were desperate about national salvation, such an idea at least looked promising.

As serious problems were perceived in traditional Chinese fiction, it was natural that the reformers would turn to foreign fiction for help in creating a new kind of Chinese fiction. Translated foreign fiction works could make a direct impact on the Chinese people, and would also act as examples to Chinese fiction writers.

To subvert traditional literature with the translation of Western works was by no means an easy task at the turn of the century. First, Chinese have always had a strong faith in their culture and literature. Second, at that time, there was a general and strong anti-foreign sentiment. One has to bear in mind that the disastrous Boxer Uprising took place roughly at the same time. In order to justify the validity, or the legitimacy for translating foreign literature, Liang and his followers adopted a very clever strategy.

We have briefly seen the first part of Liang's tactics. First, he moved fiction from the peripheral to the central position by stating that fiction was the most important among all literary genres. Second, he condemned all traditional fiction as evil and in this way constructed a literary vacuum. All that was left to be done was to fill this vacuum with translations of foreign fiction. This was the deliberate part of the 'act of violence'.

In order to have foreign fiction occupy the central position, translator-reformers, the group of people who translated foreign fiction in order to advance political reforms, at the turn of the century had to elevate the status of fiction in foreign countries. They proposed four arguments. First, in foreign countries, fiction was highly treasured and fiction writers were much respected (Chen and Xia 1989: 40–1). Second, in foreign countries, great scholars, prominent thinkers and

even important politicians wrote fiction. Third, foreign novels, as they were written by great scholars, thinkers and politicians, were very often the embodiment of noble political ideas. Fourth, as foreign novels were the embodiment of noble political ideas, they very often played an important role in affecting and improving politics in foreign countries, and in some cases, foreign fiction contributed to the wealth and strength of some countries (Chen and Xia 1989: 12, 21–3, 30, 32). Obviously these arguments were targeted against traditional Chinese fiction. Since traditional Chinese fiction was looked down upon by critics, since no respectable men of letters would ever write fiction in China, since traditional Chinese fiction and novels contained no substance but only propagated sex and violence, and since they were harmful to the people and to the country, they were far inferior to foreign fiction. This was effective in justifying why they saw in the translation of foreign fiction a means of saving the country instead of using existing traditional Chinese works, as they, the translator-reformers, in the words of André Lefevere, 'invoke[d] the authority of the [translated] text' (Lefevere 1992: 2).

Was this representation of foreign fiction by the reformers close to the facts? The translator-reformers expressed themselves extremely confidently without providing any justifications. Some critics have pointed out that the entire description of foreign fiction was but a myth created by people like Liang Qichao (Chen 1989: 4; Chen and Yuan 1993: 246), who did not have a first-hand and solid knowledge of Western literature. In the present context, the question of whether or not Liang Qichao and his group were representing a genuine picture is not significant. The important thing is that we do not see any queries from the readers of the time. People never questioned the legitimacy and the authority of the translators, and they did not even care to ask. They simply gave a kind of blanket approval. Hence, this is a question of authenticity and authority: with or without the authenticity, Liang and his group commanded the authority. This phenomenon touches on the issue of the relationship between the translators and the readers.

From a theoretical point of view, translators play the role of mediators between the source and the receptors. If the receptors are incapable of reading the original text and know nothing about the original culture, how do they know that they have entrusted the job of representing a foreign text to the right person, someone who is trustworthy? (Lefevere 1992: 1) 'Objectively' speaking, most of the translators in the late Qing, unfortunately, were not trustworthy.

There was Lin Shu, the most famous and probably most productive and successful translator of Western literature, who translated the works of great writers such as Dickens, Tolstoy, Shakespeare and Alexandre Dumas without knowing one single foreign language. There was Bao Tianxiao, whose Japanese was very weak at the time and who chose Japanese works for translation on the basis of the criterion that there should be a lot of Chinese characters in it (Bao 1971: 173). And there was the recurrence of the proud proclamation made by many translators in the prefaces to their translations that they had boldly and vigorously amended the original. Even the great Yan Fu, who had an excellent command of English and who was famous for his serious attitude towards translation, disappointingly, told the readers that he was not really doing a translation, he was just trying to 'give the gist' (*dazhi*) (Yan 1898: 117). In this case, how could and why should the readers trust the translators?

The translator-reformers, in advocating a revolution in fiction in order to advance political reform, originally had a very specific group of readers in their minds. They were the general mass who could barely read and hence could not benefit from the great teachings of the sages. One often cited statement by Kang Youwei reads:

Those who can barely read may not read the Classics, but they will all read fiction. Hence, the Classics may not be able to teach them, but fiction should be used. Orthodox history may not affect them, but fiction will. The works of Confucius may not enlighten them, but fiction will. The laws may not regulate them, but fiction will (Kang 1897: 13).

Due to this belief, the translator-reformers felt that they were far above the general public, and it was their responsibility to help and educate them, through the easiest means: fiction. One may be surprised, when one comes to read the articles written by this group of people, by the frequent reference to the general people as 'stupid subjects/foolish people' (*yumin*). To the translator-reformers, these people were so foolish that they could not even learn in schools. The only thing that could help them was to give them a piece of fiction (Chen and Xia 1989: 186). The general attitude was: 'I am the highly educated intellectual who knows a lot about the West and you are the stupid subjects who are ignorant of the modern world; let me enlighten you by telling you what is right and what you ought to know.' Through their discourse, the translators attempted to establish authority over the readers.

For this reason, there is little point talking about the 'truth' of what they said. In fact, the more mystifying their sayings were, the easier they could command control, as the readers would not be able to make a sound judgement. In this case, they could fabricate a whole version of Western fiction that suited their purpose; and their purpose was to eliminate traditional fiction and replace it with a kind of fiction that could help in 'transforming the people of the nation'.

When 'truth' was not important, the translators were left free to translate in the ways they liked. As a result, what they practised during the last decade of the Qing rule was a kind of free translation that many translation critics today would not find acceptable. In some extreme cases, it was not possible to distinguish whether a certain work was a translation or a creation.²

Nevertheless, one point must be made: this deliberate act of violence was only effective on the 'stupid subjects'. There were, of course, different readers and they demanded different things. Most unfortunately, the translator-reformers had a mistaken perception of the potential readers of their works.

As seen earlier, the revolution in fiction was originally targeted at the 'stupid subjects'. But who were the actual readers of the new fiction? We do not have a complete and reliable picture now. But according to Xu Nianci, who was himself a translator of foreign works as well as the editor of *Xiaoshuo lin* (*Fiction Forest*), 'ninety per cent of those who bought fiction were from the traditional education system and had taken in new learning' (Chen and Xia, 1989: 314). By all means, it might be possible that this group of readers were receptive to Western works, or else they would not have bought and read translated works. But on the other hand, since they were trained in traditional literature, many of them might have already formed a strong and deep-rooted conception of literature. Beyond doubt, they had aesthetic and cultural preferences. It was highly possible that they might, on the one hand, be sceptical of foreign matters; and on the other, had high esteem for Chinese culture and literature. Translator-reformers could in no way call these people 'stupid subjects' or 'foolish people'. As they constituted the largest bulk of readership, it was certainly unwise to offend or alienate them. Consequently, not only did they not want to represent translation as an act of violence, the translator-reformers even adopted a highly compromising attitude so that these people would not be tempted to view translation as an act of violence. More conservative minded gentry were prone to using the pretext that Western fiction was alien and hence not suitable

for the Chinese readers in order to urge people to stop and block translation (Chen and Xia 1989: 149). The underlying ideology was that Chinese culture and literature was superior to alien culture and literature. This was in direct contradiction to what the translator-reformers said to the 'stupid subjects'. One very interesting piece of writing by a certain Xiaren compared the strong and weak points of Chinese and Western fiction. With practically no knowledge of a foreign language or Western literature, he relied on the few translations he had been able to come across, which he found extremely dry and boring, to make a 'definitive' judgement that Chinese fiction, despite a few inadequacies, was 'thousands and thousands of times superior to Western fiction' (Xiaren 1905: 76-7). Such an attitude is understandable. People like Xiaren had read thousands of works of Chinese fiction, but they had literally no knowledge of Western fiction. In order to protect their own position and interest, they had no choice but to defend Chinese fiction. Hence, they would be predisposed to view translation as an act of violence. Before this group of readers, the translator-reformers had lost the kind of authority they had over the 'stupid subjects'. We can see in the translations and writings of the translator-reformers a number of methods to please this group of readers and to convince them that there were merits in Western fiction. Their chief tactic was to downplay the subversiveness hidden in the translations.

In order to please the readers with their translations, the translator-reformers would have to eliminate any element in the original that might be offensive. Further, sometimes, they might have to put in things that were not actually present in the original. Consequently, as in the case of the deliberate violations, their translations could not be 'faithful' to the original, in order not to be *received* as an act of violence. Hence, in the late Qing and Early Republican Period, the general trend was to translate extremely freely, in a manner which amounts to what can be identified as 'rewriting' (Lefevere 1985: 88-106). People did not consider the original work, or faithfulness to the original, an important factor. On the contrary, they put most emphasis on the readers, no matter whether their purpose was to educate them so that they could contribute to national reform and salvation, or to make the works sell well in market. Before the 'stupid' readers, they were ready to be authoritative and instructional with a stern face, in which case translation was deliberately manipulated as an act of violence. As for the traditionally trained and highly educated readers, they would

wear a smiling face, in which case translation was carefully done so that it would not be received as an act of violence.

Translation and readership

Since a major goal for translating Western fiction was to educate people, the translator-reformers adopted a kind of 'political reception' attitude in translation (Fan and Zhu 1993: 182). This attitude could be reflected in the choice of works to be translated, the way such works were read, as well as the ways they were translated. Predictably, the so-called 'political novels' were, at least for a time, highly popular, followed by 'science fiction', such as the works of Jules Verne, and the 'detective stories', such as the works of Arthur Conan Doyle. These were the three great categories of translated fiction at the turn of the century (Chen and Xia 1989: 83). Political novels, which carried 'noble political thoughts', should not, in the eyes of the translator-reformers, be just taken lightly as fiction (ibid.: 23). Science fiction was considered to be a very effective means to propagate scientific knowledge, since it could do so in an attractive way and hence could be taken as remedy for the lack of scientific spirit among the Chinese (Lu Xun 1981, 10: 152); the detective stories reflected the ugly side of Chinese officialdom (Chen Xiji 1908: 327). In ways of translation and reading of Western works, a very common practice was for the translators to identify and highlight the slightest elements of politics in the original and relate them to the situation of China. They frequently did a political reading of the fiction in the preface or afterword of the translations in order to influence the readers. One obvious example was Harriet Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. While the original described in detail the suffering of black people in the US, the translator Lin Shu, rendering the title as *Black Slaves' Appeal to Heaven* (*Heinu yutianlu*), related it to the situation of the large number of Chinese workers in America. He urged the readers to take the novel as a mirror and be alerted that there was an imminent possibility that the Chinese would become slaves. For this reason, he persuaded his readers not to consider it as a strange story written by a low-class fiction writer (Lin 1901a: 28). A similar example can be found in another translation by Lin, H. Rider Haggard's *People of the Mist* (*Wuzhongren*). In the preface, he cautioned the Chinese that as the whites could occupy Africa, they could also conquer China; and the purpose of his translating this book was to 'alert the Chinese

so that they could defend themselves against invasion and racial extinction' (Lin 1906: 167-8).

As we have seen earlier, faithfulness to the original was not the translators' main concern. Some translator-reformers were obviously too eager to make use of translation to propagate political ideas, and in some extreme cases, they simply inserted large paragraphs to achieve this goal. One amusing example occurred in Su Manshu's translation of Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* (*Can shijie*). The following criticism against the Chinese, made in a speech by the French protagonist in the translation text, was inserted by Su:

Only the despicable Chinese would take the Confucian education in slavery as the golden rule. Should we, the noble French citizens, listen to all this bullshit (*goupi*)? The customs of China are barbaric. They spend a lot of money in burning incense and paper to worship the clay or wooden Buddhas. More ridiculous still, their women use a piece of white cloth to bind up their feet. They cannot really walk because their feet become as pointed as the hoofs of pigs. Don't you think that is ridiculous? (Quoted from Fan 1993: 173)

However, when the readers were traditionally trained intellectuals, the translator-reformers could not hope to gain their support by saying that Chinese customs and Confucian teaching were barbaric and ridiculous. Instead, they had to speak in their language. We have seen, in earlier sections, that fiction was traditionally looked down upon and we have also seen that translator-reformers had urged the use of fiction for national salvation. So one difficult task was to convince the conservative gentry that fiction could carry messages that were important enough to save the country. Viewed from this perspective, it is interesting to note that the translator-reformers often told their readers not to take the fiction simply as fiction, but as clothing precepts (*geyan*). This can be interpreted as an attempt to pacify those traditional readers who were not used to taking fiction seriously.

In the eyes of this group of readers, both the content and the form of foreign fiction might be unacceptable, as they were in many ways different from traditional Chinese literature. In terms of content, one very important element would be ethical values. While the conservatives could accept some very ridiculous contents, as traditional fiction was the one kind of literary genre that allowed very strange and mysterious ideas, they could not tolerate works that

contained what they considered ethically offensive or inadmissible material. Qian Xuantong, who was to become one of the strongest advocates of the new culture movement during the May Fourth era, once criticised severely the general attitude of those translators who used Chinese moral standards as the only yardstick in judging a piece of Western fiction. He listed a number of examples: Westerners were accused of ignoring the proper relationships between people; their advocacy of freedom of marriage and courtship exerted a pernicious influence; workers' strikes were serious crimes that brought social disorder. As Qian said, such ideas were often expressed in the prefaces to the translations (Liu 1995: 10).

Among the translators that Qian Xuantong criticised was the great Lin Shu. It is true that in many of the prefaces he wrote, Lin condemned some of the ideas expressed in the originals as contrary to Chinese ethics, and he cautioned the Chinese readers not to be influenced by them. Lin Shu, himself being a traditional intellectual who was trained in classical Chinese, would not consciously offend his traditional, if not conservative contemporaries – and in a decade or so, he became the strongest opponent of the new culture movement. But there was one interesting case in which he was blamed, in the translation of H. Rider Haggard's *Joan Haste*, (*Jiayin xiaozhuan*) for retaining too much of the original, so that his translation conflicted with Chinese ethical standards.

Joan Haste was first translated and published by Yang Zilin and Bao Tianxiao in 1901–1902. In the preface of their translation, they said they did not have the whole book and could therefore only translate sections of it. After a couple of years, Lin Shu claimed that he had got the original and since he was not able to find out who the translators were (as Yang Zilin used a pen-name), he had to translate the whole book himself so that such a good work could be introduced into China in full (Lin 1905f: 138). But unfortunately Yang and Bao were telling a lie: they were in possession of the whole book but they deliberately deleted sections that they found would not be acceptable, ethically, to the conservative group.³ They crossed out the entire section in which the protagonist, Joan, had a baby with her boyfriend before she was married to another man. In their version, Joan was portrayed as a perfect angel who sacrificed herself for the good of others. This image won the admiration of many Chinese readers who thought that Joan's love was unique, great and sacred. But Lin Shu's full translation shattered this ideal image. He put back the section on Joan's pregnancy and retained many of the details that the other two

translators purposefully deleted. For this, he was severely criticised. People accused Lin of depicting an ugly image for Joan. A lenient comment said, 'for the sake of the Chinese society, it is more appropriate to follow what Bao has done and cross out the section on pregnancy' (Song 1905: 155). A harsher critic accused, 'How unfortunate it was for Joan to have Lin Shu reveal all her evil deeds', 'Has Joan done any wrong to Lin Shu? Why should Lin translate all the contents that Yang deliberately avoided?' (Yin 1907: 229). The most interesting thing is that people, after Lin Shu's translation appeared, knew very well that Yang and Bao had told a lie, and they knew that all the omissions had been deliberately made. But still, they thought that the two translators were right to do so. Lin's translation could not win the support of the readers, although it was certainly a more complete and faithful one.

Another example is the treatment of Christian thinking in Western fiction. As mentioned above, the anti-foreign feeling at the turn of the century was very strong and missionaries were the main targets of attack in the Boxer rebellion. Translators then faced a dilemma when they came to religious matters, and we can see two approaches. Lin Shu, in his translation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, deleted most of the religious matter, on the pretext that 'it was for the convenience of the readers' (Lin 1901: 27-8). On the other hand, when he came to translate *Robinson Crusoe*, he retained the religious matter. But he had to add a long explanation:

In the book, there are many descriptions of religious matter. It looks as if the translator is devoted to that religion. This is not true. Translating a book is different from writing one. A writer can express his views freely, and he can write out of his imagination. But when you translate, you are recounting what has happened. How can you put in your own opinions? This book talks about religious matters. How can I, as the translator, avoid them and delete them? I have to follow what was said in the book (Lin 1905a: 146).

The fact that the same translator adopted two entirely different approaches shows how difficult a situation he had to face. The two explanations he gave are noteworthy. When he decided to delete the parts on Christianity, he said it was for the convenience of the readers. When he decided to keep them, he had to explain to the readers that he had no choice but to be faithful to the original. Hence, we can say, whatever his decision was, the readers were his first priority.

Another way to please the conservative readers was to give more space to what they liked to hear. Lin Shu was very clever in employing this strategy. Although he understood very well that H. Rider Haggard's *Montezuma's Daughter* was a story about the subjugation of Mexico, he deliberately shifted the emphasis and stressed the revenge of the protagonist Thomas for his father. The title was changed into *Revenge of a Filial British Boy* (*Ying xiaozi huoshan baochou lu*); and in the preface to the translation, he spent several paragraphs on the filial deeds of the protagonist, leading to the conclusion that it was wrong to think the Westerners paid no attention to filial piety. His conclusion was: wrong conceptions about Westerners were harmful to the promotion of Western learning. He was happy that he was able to translate this book; he could let the fathers and elder brothers in China know that Westerners were also filial and hence Western learning could be promoted (Lin 1905b: 109). This tactic was employed again in translating William L. Alden's *Jimmy Brown Trying to Find Europe* – the title was changed into *An American Boy Travelled Ten Thousand Miles to Find his Parents* (*Meizhou tongzi wanli xunqinji*). The last two lines of the preface were very clever. After highlighting the benevolent deeds of Jimmy Brown, he went on to say that despite his support for introducing Western learning, he was against those who ignored filial piety (Lin 1905c: 140). By so saying, he was in effect consoling the more conservative readers that the introduction of Western learning would not undermine traditional Chinese ethical values.

Apart from the content, translators were also very cautious not to import too alien a form to confront the readers. Traditional novels, though never taken seriously by 'men of letters', were widely read and their 'standard' form had been accepted very tolerantly. Foreign fiction had a very different form, both in terms of narration and in format. In the translations, we can often see vigorous amendments to the original in order to accommodate the reading habits and aesthetic tastes of the Chinese readers.

On the question of narration, there was, in most cases, a kind of omnipotent, omniscient, third-person narrator in traditional fiction and novels, especially in *zhanghui xiaoshuo* (chapter fiction) (Chen 1988). The narrator recounted the story to the readers at a detached distance. Hence traditional fiction usually tells the stories of others. Even though there were some exceptions, in which there was a first-person narrator who played a part in the story, usually as the recorder of the story or the observer of a new world, the 'I' seldom took up the role of the chief protagonist in them (Chen 1988: 77).

When turn-of-the-century translators faced the problem of the narrator, they had to take into consideration the reading habits of the readers. As pointed out by one critic, the first three important translations of Western works that had made an impact on Chinese writers, Timothy Moore's translation of *Bainian yijiao* (*Slept for a Hundred Years*), Lin Shu's translation of Alexandre Dumas' *La Dame aux Camelias*, and *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*, were narrated by a first person 'I' in the originals, but in the Chinese translation they were all changed into a third person (Chen 1988: 76). Apart from these three, we can also identify in the translations a narrator that takes the role of the traditional story-teller (*shuoshu ren*). The story-teller usually addressed the readers/audience (*kanguan*) directly; and in most cases, he adopted a 'third-person rhetorical mode' as specified by Milena Dolezelová in her discussion of the typology of narrative modes, meaning that 'the narrator is not an acting character, but, unlike the objective narrator, is free to express his subjective evaluations and observations. The narrator's primary function of representation is here coupled with the function of interpretation.' (Dolezelová-Velingerová 1980: 58-9). As a result, the translator put in a narrator who not only recounted the stories, but also gave a lot of comments, which were in fact comments that came from the translators. Moreover, they would also add jokes to the translations, which served no purpose but to amuse the readers. This was meant to please the readers as they had been accustomed to take traditional fiction for leisure reading.

The ways the narrators presented their stories in the translations were also affected by traditional fiction. In order to please the Chinese readers, accommodating both their reading habits and their aesthetic values, the translators made a lot of changes to the original. One critic has pointed out that in all the 11 translated novels that were published in the fiction magazine *Xiuxiang xiaoshuo* (*Fiction Illustrated*), without exception, the background and the descriptions of natural scenery were cut. Instead they inserted a stereotyped description at the beginning, which in fact could be used in any piece of work (Guo 1996: 10). Moreover, we can also easily find in the translations clichés that were frequently used in traditional fiction and novels, the commonest being *huashuo*, *qeshuo*, *gewei kanguan*; and for some time, the ending line in *zhanghui xiaoshuo* ('If you want to know what will happen next, please go to the next chapter.' (*yuzhi houshi ruhe, qieting xiahui fenjie*)) was almost inevitable.

In plot structures, translation of Western fiction also made an impact on traditional fiction and its readers. As pointed out by many

critics, the principal plot construction in traditional Chinese fiction was an episodic one, and almost without exception, the events and episodes were represented in the form of a linear and natural temporal progression (Dolezelová-Velingerová 1980: 40; Chen 1988: 41). When readers of this kind of fiction faced a new plot structure, it took some time before they could become accustomed to it.

Generally speaking, Chinese readers were more receptive to the different plot structures, as we can see in many of the prefaces of the translations where the translators praised highly these new plot structures. They appreciated, in particular, the sudden and abrupt beginning in narration. The narrator did not follow the time sequence, and very often adopted a flashback technique to recount what had happened earlier. This was especially exciting for detective stories, as they were able to produce a sense of suspense. However, we still find that a number of strategies were adopted to convince the readers that these plot structures were better than those in traditional fiction.

First, as said earlier, the translators repeatedly commended highly the plot structures in Western fiction. Translators like Zhou Guisheng and Lin Shu, as well as Liang Qichao, stated categorically that only master-hands could recount stories in these ways (Liang 1902b: 47; Zhou 1903:94). Through indoctrination of this kind, the readers could be convinced that Western fiction had better plot structures. Second, in order to please the readers, they told them that there was nothing new in the plot structures or other techniques of the foreign fiction, for they could be found in traditional Chinese literature. For instance, Lin Shu, in many cases, compared the techniques used in foreign fiction to those used by great ancient Chinese writers. So, Rider Haggard's style was similar to that of Sima Qian and Tao Yuanming (Lin 1905d: 141-2), Walter Scott, because of his *Ivanhoe*, should also occupy a high literary standing like Sima Qian (Lin 1905e: 118). In this way, no matter how highly they praised foreign works, their words were acceptable to the Chinese readers, as they would be happy to know that such techniques could be found in ancient Chinese literature.

Translators also used the language to please the conservatives. It is true that in traditional fiction, the vernacular was often used, and there were such great vernacular novels as *The Water Margin* and the *Red Chamber Dream*. However, as said earlier, traditional fiction never occupied any important position in Chinese literature. One reason for this was the use of the vernacular. Translators of Western fiction at

the turn of the century were clever not to commit the mistake of belittling the value of their translations by using a language looked down upon by the traditional gentry. Hence it is understandable why Lin Shu was such a popular translator, as Lin was one of the last masters of the Tongcheng style of classical prose. Moreover, when we go to the commentaries on the translations, we often find people paying great attention to the language. They were more concerned with the 'translation style' (*yibi*), which was in effect the 'writing style' (*wenbi*) than the content of the story. A comment made in the preface to *Tianyan lun* (*Evolution and Ethics*) by Wu Rulun, a great Tongcheng essayist, was significant. Although *Evolution and Ethics* was not a piece of literary writing, Wu recommended strongly the beautiful writing style of the translator, Yan Fu: 'One can translate only if one can write essays as good as Yan Fu's' (Wu 1898: 263). It was through the recommendation of Wu that Yan rose to fame and his translations gained great respect among intellectuals. Without doubt, good writing style was a major selling point for the translations of the translator-reformers.

At the turn of the century, the vernacular was beginning to gain some recognition as an important tool in China's self-strengthening and writers and translators alike started to use the vernacular to write and translate. Nevertheless, people still considered the literary style, or *wenyan*, as the 'official' language. A very typical attitude can be found in an article written by Yao Pengtu called 'Lun baihua xiaoshuo' ('On Vernacular Fiction'). Yao admitted that vernacular newspapers had made tremendous contributions to the dissemination of knowledge to the masses. 'Thanks to *Shen Bao*, an employee in a shop in Shanghai can tell you the names of a number of foreign countries', Yao said. However, he quickly moved on to say that for the more educated, it was a lot easier to read *wenyan* than *baihua*. He told the readers his personal experience in writing speeches – it was a hundred times more difficult to use *baihua* than *wenyan*, as the latter was simple, straightforward and easy to understand (Yao 1905: 134–5). Obviously, this experience was shared by many people at that time. Lu Xun, who then still called himself Zhou Shuren, in his translation of Jules Verne's *From The Earth to The Moon*, intended at first to use the vernacular, but eventually, he had to shift to *wenyan*, since he found the vernacular clumsy and redundant (Lu Xun 1981, Vol. 10: 152). This shows that they did not have much respect for the vernacular, despite the fact that they sometimes used it. This attitude can again be related to the stratification of society: the high

intellectuals would use *wenyan*, while for the 'stupid subjects', the lower class, a simple language, *baihua* should be given to them.

We can take an example from a 'detective story', 'The Sculptor's Daughter' (*Muyecha*). It was done in plain or even vulgar vernacular. In the commentaries written by the (anonymous) translator, he explained the reasons why he used the vernacular. First, according to him, the vernacular was suitable for translating detective stories. Second, as people were then talking about the building of the national language (*guoyu*), he thought that he might contribute through the use of the vernacular in the translation. These reasons were high-sounding enough. However, when he came to talk about why he wanted to translate this book, he described his potential readers in this way: 'The many deaf, blind, stupid and dumb Chinese nationals, whose hearts are filled with dried grass, should read this kind of book' (Chen and Xia 1989: 157). Obviously, this was the group of 'stupid subjects' that the translator had in mind when he decided to use the vernacular. If his potential readers were the literate gentry, we can almost be certain that the literary style would be adopted. A similar case can also be found in the translation of *Ten Boys who Lived on the Road from Long Ago to Now*, the translation title of which became *Popular Historical Romance of the West* (*Xishi tongshu yanyi*). The translator made it very clear that he used the vernacular to translate the book for the benefit of Chinese children (Liu 1995: 8). Again, it was the potential readers that governed the use of language.

Conclusion

Susan Bassnett, in the last chapter of her book *Comparative Literature: A Critical Introduction*, entitled 'From Comparative Literature to Translation Studies', discussed the process of the building up of translation studies as a principal discipline (Bassnett 1993: 138-61). A central issue is the position that translation takes up in the power hierarchy as against the source text. Traditionally, translation has never been considered equal to the original. 'Translation, it is suggested, "betrays", "traduces", "diminishes", "reduces", "loses" parts of the original, translation is "derivative", "mechanical", "secondary", poetry is lost in translation, certain writers are "untranslatable"' (Bassnett 1993: 140). Hence, there have been such analogies as translations are like women, they should either be faithful or beautiful; translators are like slaves, the servants of the source texts, who 'labour on another man's plantation'.

But with the coming of the post-modern age, Derrida, in his reading of Walter Benjamin's introduction to the German translation of Baudelaire's *Tableaux Parisiens*, completely did away with the idea of the primacy of the original. He argued that the source text was not an original at all: 'it is the elaboration of an idea, of a meaning, in short it is in itself a translation'. Bassnett comments on this as follows: 'The logical consequences of Derrida's thinking about translation would be the abolition of the dichotomy between original and translation, between source and copy, and hence an end to the view that relegates translation to a secondary position.' (Bassnett 1993: 151)

In the above study of late Qing and early Republican translation activities in China, translation is not taken as playing a secondary role to the original. In fact, the source texts basically occupy no position in our study. After all, it is futile to pretend that one can easily do a textual comparison between the source texts and the translations done in that period. In many cases, we cannot identify the source texts on which the translation was based. Sometimes, even if we know of the original, we still cannot do a comparison, as the translation might be a re-translation from other languages, say, the Japanese. Further, as many translations were done by 'translators' who had very little knowledge of the source language and culture, there are certainly many 'differences' between the originals and the translations, many things are missing, and the translations are bound to be 'unfaithful'. There is little significance in pointing this out. What I have attempted to do is to see how translation worked as an intruding external force upon a specific political, social, literary and ideological context. The question of authority and power is our main concern. I am convinced that this will enable us to identify the 'differences' and 'unfaithfulness' in a more meaningful way.

Notes

- 1 For a general account of early translation activities in China, see Ma Zuyi (1984).
- 2 For example, despite the enormous number of research done on Lu Xun, scholars are still uncertain whether his 'Sibada zhi hun' ('The Spirit of Sparta') is a translation or Lu Xun's own creation.
- 3 In his recollection, Bao insisted that they did not have the whole book at the time they translated *Joan Haste* (Bao 1971: 172).

Beyond Butterflies

Some observations on the early years of the journal
Xiaoshuo yuebao

Denise Gimpel

Introduction

The journal *Xiaoshuo yuebao*, a Shanghai Commercial Press publication, first appeared in July 1910. Its first phase is generally accepted to last until 1921, when it was taken over by writers whose aims are considered to be radically different from those of the first years, the publication then bearing the stamp of the 'new literature' and the May Fourth Movement (Fan 1982: 82). To my knowledge, however, there has not been, as yet, any in-depth study of its contents or character during this early phase, despite the fact that comments upon its general nature abound in secondary sources. It is generally regarded as one of the prime examples of a magazine which published stories of the Mandarin Duck and Butterfly type (*yuanyang hudie pai*), sentimental love stories, stories aimed at 'mere' entertainment, with a peripheral, if any, social message (Fairbank and Liu 1950: 485; Wei 1980: 282; Gálik 1969: 48; Link 1981: 251; Lee 1983: 466; Fan 1983: 97).

Such sweeping statements about its general make-up, I would argue, do not do justice to it. In the process of looking into the early years of its publication, I have been surprised at the possible social and political connotations of some of the contributions; *Xiaoshuo yuebao* has a good deal to say about the topics of its day. However, one of the major problems encountered in such work is actually how to assess what one reads within this 'context of the day'. This becomes all the more difficult when one is not dealing with authors who are consciously addressing the monumental questions of their

times, or clearly discussing political questions in a newspaper, but are speaking to their readership on a regular basis about topics which must have been clear to the readers. Much of what was being discussed or presented by contributors to such magazines as *Xiaoshuo yuebao* may, at the time of publication, have had distinct relevance, struck a definite chord with the readership, in the light of daily political or social events whose significance has paled before the 'major issues' of a greater historical sweep. In order to be able to approach these texts in any useful way, the reader of today has to attempt to re-construct the historical reader's and writer's stance (and very often the individuals concerned were both producers and consumers), to appreciate the mood of the society/societies within which he moved: society at large, or smaller and larger groupings in which individuals were involved. In the words of Pierre Bourdieu (1993:32):¹

Ignorance of everything that goes to make up the 'mood of the age' produces a derealization of works: stripped of everything that attached them to the most concrete debates of their time (I am thinking in particular of the connotations of words), they are impoverished and transformed in the direction of intellectualism and empty humanism.

This kind of recording, analysis, and appreciation of texts is the necessary first step towards assessing *Xiaoshuo yuebao* within the larger framework of a quite complex field of writing and publishing in the first two decades of this century in China, i.e. between the later nineteenth century and roughly 1915 when, perhaps, the arrival of such journals as *Xin qingnian* (*La Jeunesse*) and *Xin chao* (*Renaissance*) may have had wider reverberations within the publishing world. That this magazine must be counted amongst the important players within this early field should be self-evident. Not only was it immensely popular (Gálik 1969: 48; Fan 1983: 82); its very existence over such a long period presupposes a stable position: other comparable magazines were much shorter-lived (*Xin xiaoshuo* 1902–1906; *Xiuxiang xiaoshuo* 1903–1906; *Yueyue xiaoshuo* 1906–1908; *Xiaoshuo lin* 1907–1908 (Rui 1987: 627ff.)). Moreover it would seem unlikely that the later editors would have wished to take over a publication with an in any way questionable reputation or flagging circulation. The field of literary publications of the very late Qing period and very early Republican era has only recently begun to attract the scholarly attention it deserves. Here is not the place to go

into discussion of the 'scholarly field'. However, it is striking that the majority of historical or literary studies (be they Chinese or Western) do seem to skip over the years 1900 to 1911 with surprising ease and alacrity. Two recent and welcome exceptions are Reynolds 1993 and Thompson 1995. Due to the lack of studies and reliable information on primary sources, there can be no intention – as yet – of making any general statements about the position of this magazine within this framework.

My aim here is to offer some examples of what was happening within the pages of *Xiaoshuo yuebao* in the first years and to try to assess them on their own merits, to ask why certain topics may have been addressed and to attempt to gain a general idea of the type of publication it was. In looking at these texts, I have tried to take a possible Chinese reader² and his world-view as a starting point for reconstructing the reader's/writer's stance (i.e. what could be his basic cultural assumptions on certain matters? What topics were being discussed at the time? How much possible media coverage might there have been for certain topics? What were the urgent needs he might have felt?), and I have tried to find out how he may have understood or assimilated what he read or intended what he wrote. This last question is sometimes an extremely difficult one, since a number of these writers did not feel the need to write about themselves, to create an image or position for themselves in the publishing world. Of course, one could argue that this equation contains too many unknowns to be feasible, but in the examples cited below, the situation would appear relatively clear.

In the following I concentrate largely on the section 'Translations' (*Yicong*), adding some examples from other sections later. This Translations section generally consisted of three to seven pages of information, whose source is seldom given, on the most diverse topics to do with things foreign. Perhaps one could characterise it as a kind of Reader's Digest of the international press. This was not a lengthy section of the magazine, which generally comprised a total of around 100 pages, almost half of which was taken up by translations of foreign novels or longer fictional texts by Chinese authors (*changpian xiaoshuo*). The remaining half consisted of various short fictional stories (*duanpian xiaoshuo*), short informative texts, travel reports, poems, etc. These other sections cannot be dealt with here, although some items will be mentioned below in passing. The Translations section, then, was one of those that the reader could tackle in a relatively short time, one that did not need the concentration of a

longer novel instalment. It belonged to the 'informative' and not the 'literary' portion of the publication.

The first two numbers of 1910 (July and August) and their Translations sections take a closer look at two British monarchs. July 1910 deals with Edward VII, who had died in May of that year, and August 1910 with his successor George V. The information presented on the two may be summarised as follows.

Edward VII

Edward's lucky number was nine, which is reflected in the majority of important events in his life: both parents were born in 1819, he was born on November 9th, he married Alexandra of Denmark in 1863 ($6 + 3 = 9$), he was crowned in 1901, on August 9th. The reader is then informed that his favourite dog was called Caesar and after his death the dog pined for him. Thereupon a member of the Guards was seconded to the care of the dog. A French statesman of the day had summarised Edward's political abilities saying that he dealt with home affairs like someone just beginning to copy down the *Huangting [jing]*, the 'Book of the Yellow Court', an alchemical text of the Daoist tradition. The Frenchman believed that Edward's right actions were more a result of luck than judgement, presumably a reference to the complexity of the book and its cryptic character. His abilities in foreign affairs are likened to those of an expert ball player of much technical skill.

Edward's private feelings are reflected in an alleged quotation from his private diary. He was relieved once his daily state business had been completed. He much preferred to retire into his private world, make himself a cup of tea, smoke a cigarette and read a 'good' book (*xiaoshuo*, i.e. fiction) or to sit and chat with his wife and daughter. These, for him, were the most pleasant aspects of his life as a king. He was, however, quite aware of the fact that he had a public image to uphold: even when he was not in the mood, he would put on a brave face and act the part of the monarch. His attitude is summed up in what are purported to be his first words as king and his last words respectively: 'I am willing to take on [this position]' and 'I have done my duty'.

His hobbies are then discussed. He collects walking sticks and he enjoys reading fictional works on travel, hunting and military matters. His favourite novel is *East Lynne* by Mrs. Henry Wood,³ which he confesses to having read three times. Furthermore, Edward had been

mad about fire engines all his life and had set up a fire brigade in London together with a number of other gentlemen. Sometimes he even went out with the firemen to fight a fire. Nobody would have realised he was of royal blood then.

George V

The text dealing with Edward's successor, George V is somewhat longer and slightly different in emphasis. We are told that George V had a great physical likeness to Tsar Nicholas II of Russia, but that his personality resembled that of his grandfather George III. The reader is informed of the date of his accession to the throne (May 6th 1910) and then given a kind of character sketch of the king. His lifestyle and behaviour as Prince of Wales – the title of the crown prince – must not necessarily be taken as a hint as to what kind of king he is going to be. After all, Henry V and Edward VII had sown their wild oats as young crown princes, but Edward's attitude to life, the reader is told, had changed almost overnight on his becoming king. As a king Edward had been revered by his people, and at his death the citizens of Britain were unspeakably sad. George, as his successor, had the earnest wish to keep the country as peaceful and as prosperous as it had been under Edward.

The reader is then informed of the British system of government in which the sovereign has no rights as far as policy making is concerned. In matters of state and government he must abide by the decisions of his ministers (*ting ming yu dachen*). The British, we are told, have a saying, 'Our King [may be] of no use to the country, but he cannot harm the people either.' Thus the British monarch is a ruler in name only. This, the text continues, does not necessarily apply to George who, when he sees that his ministers want to pass a law which will be of benefit to the people, supports them with all his might, but who will always find a way of opposing a policy that will not be of benefit to the people. He is not one to jump on any bandwagon. He prefers to express his own opinion, particularly with regard to politics.

George had always been interested in the Navy, had climbed mountains, sailed the seas and travelled the five continents. Therefore he was perfectly well informed about the situation of the peoples under British rule. He had learned his lessons from history: George III had lost the American colonies due to his ignorance of the actual situation there. George V did not wish to make the same mistake

again. He enjoyed discussing state affairs and stated his opinion outright and without much ado. Whenever parliament was in session, he would be present to express his opinions. His words were based on what he himself had actually seen and heard – a result of his wide travels and knowledge of the world. Whenever he returned from a voyage, he would say that British expatriates (*Yingqiao*) were loyal subjects and patriots and that one day the fate of Britain would depend upon them. Thus they were not to be neglected. Moreover, George was aware of essential current affairs. He often said that at a time of competition between the nations of the world it was necessary to build up a strong naval force and to have a sound knowledge of military matters. Britain should heed these things so as not to lag behind the rest of the world. George was also a man of learning and culture. He had written much and was a good speaker. He moreover had a high regard for other peoples: during the Boer War, he had always advocated peace negotiations, and he had said that if the British wished to rule over India they must treat the Indian people with all courtesy. The King's experience (*shijian*) and knowledge (*xuewen*) were extremely broad. In times of crisis he worked untiringly. His only problem was that he could be somewhat dogmatic and therefore somewhat extreme. He was frugal in his personal habits, never eating or drinking too much. He was adept in practical household matters and impressed all around him with these abilities. When he was not occupied with affairs of state, he would return to his palace and look after his children, enjoying life with his family. Finally George was a good marksman; he never missed. In fact he was the second best shot in Britain. He went to bed at 10.30 pm and rose at 6.30 am, every day without fail. This was evidence of his industry and intelligence.

The picture of Edward VII that is painted for the Chinese reader⁴ is not necessarily that of a national leader who could be held up as an exemplar of the kingly virtues. The paragraphs which deal with his lucky number, his pet dog, and his hobbies can be regarded as snippets of interesting information as entertainment, much akin to those to be found in magazines of today and which purport to tell us more about the private lives of a Silvia of Sweden or a Princess Diana. Moreover, the information is also not particularly exotic in character: belief in numerology was a very Chinese thing, as was collecting objects. His reading preferences – all fiction – show him to be interested in stories about travel and the military (rather than in the realities, compare George V) and to be, like most other people of the

day, an ardent admirer of the novels of Mrs Henry Wood, whose first novel, which Edward had read three times, was just one of her world bestsellers and had been translated into a large number of languages. Her popularity in her own day must have far outstripped that of the authors who have become household names today. Her novels included elements of social criticism, had a frequently moralising tone and incorporated much of the supernatural (Drabble 1986: 1081). It is, in fact, conceivable that this book was also available in translation to the Chinese reader.

Two whole lines deal with his abilities as a monarch, and these are not particularly flattering. We are not told of any innate ability or interest in either home or foreign affairs. Rather, Edward either avails himself of a kind of beginner's luck or he relies on more technical merit than mental astuteness. He is, in his own words, much happier when he can retire to his personal pleasures: his cup of tea, his cigarette and a novel, or a cozy family chat. Even though Edward is aware of the role he must play as the sovereign and the fact that all eyes are on him, he plays a defensive game, trying to avoid difficulties rather than recognising and tackling problems directly. He apparently has the technical skills of a monarch, more or less, but his attitude would seem to be somewhat wanting. He appears to be consciously playing the role of the monarch rather than being one.

A far different picture is drawn in the case of George V. Practically all of the much longer text concentrates on aspects of his role as the British king. One may assume, we are told, that George has recognised the responsibility his sudden accession to the throne entails.

At this juncture it will be useful to go through the various points in the text in the light of events and issues in China at the time. The year 1910 in China was one in which there was a great deal of discussion and activity on the part of reform circles. In November of the previous year, representatives from 16 provinces had met under the leadership of Zhang Jian (1853–1926) and had decided to petition for an early convening of parliament (Chang 1968: 143–84). This decision turned into what may rightly be considered a broad movement in the first ten months of the year. Three petitions were handed in to the Court on January 26th, June 22nd, and October 3rd respectively. The first petition was signed by 200,000 people, the second by 300,000, and the third by 25 million. Thus the present texts dealing with British monarchs and their roles within the

constitutional government are neatly wedged between the second and third petitions, a time when – if we may believe the figures – a good 24.5 million people were being mobilised in the cause of a step towards a more representative form of government. Of this period in 1910, Chang P'eng-yuan says:

The constitutionalists organized themselves efficiently. Those who were able to write prepared the texts of the petitions; those who were eloquent spoke to the masses in the large cities. The petitioners, most of them between the ages of thirty and forty and having some knowledge of modern political science, took responsibility for the practical work. They conferred together before each step. They improved with experience. The second petition was better organized than the first; the third was more colourful than the second. *In 1910 the attention of the whole nation seemed to be attracted by the petitioners.* (Chang 1968: 162) (My emphasis)

The question of a constitutional government and the role of the monarch was, of course, not a new one in China of 1910. Kang Youwei's petition of 1895 had already criticised the lack of contact between the ruler and the ruled as well as the fact that the ruler in his isolation had no idea of what the people were thinking, which in turn led to a dwindling in the sense of obligation to the country on the part of the people.⁵ Any knowledge he had of his subjects was thus of a second-hand nature. A little later, Huang Zunxian (1848–1905), a man of broad learning and great practical experience in foreign countries, was also to criticise the fact that the ruler had become remote from his people (Kamachi 1981: 145). However, as John Fincher remarks:

In the years surrounding the 1898 reform attempt, pressure for reform was largely in the hands of organized groups of public-minded men, many of whom had been office holders. These groups, however, were primarily private and operated more often with the suspicious tolerance or opposition of officials than with their encouragement. (Fincher 1968: 214)

How much different then was the basic nature of the situation some ten years later when such topics as the role of the sovereign and a constitutional monarchy were on everybody's lips – almost each issue of *Dongfang zazhi*, for instance, for the year 1910 carried articles discussing the question of a constitution – and even a publication like

Xiaoshuo yuebao was addressing such questions without having to label them explicitly.

Edward VII would also appear from the text to be the kind of ruler without direct contact to his people or, at least, one who has not made a concerted effort to gain any first-hand knowledge of the circumstances of their lives. The contrast to the George V depicted in the text of the following number is quite startling. Here quite a different kind of constitutional leader is held up for scrutiny. George had become king after the death of a very popular but, if we may believe the depiction of Edward, slightly distant monarch. He was well aware, according to our text, that his task of maintaining such popularity and keeping the country prosperous and peaceful was not an easy one. He could only hope that his wishes for the future would come true. In China, too, only two years previously, there had been a change of emperor. The Guangxu emperor had died in 1908 and had been succeeded by a child emperor, Xuantong, on whose behalf a group of regents and advisers, mostly Manchus, ruled. The Guangxu emperor was apparently also very popular. Whether his death caused a sense of unspeakable sadness and loss to the whole nation is difficult to assess. However, he did enjoy a positive reputation, and was the focus of a great deal of hope, amongst elite reformist circles, due to his active support of reform plans. The regents for his successor gradually showed themselves to be incompetent and apparently acting out of nepotistic interest rather than that of the people (MacKinnon 1980: 211; Spence 1991: 248).

There is some difficulty in speaking about 'the people' in the Chinese context here. In the early years of reform movements, the 'people' was often probably simply synonymous with those interested in reform or those who were members of various groups, a kind of 'we' (see Sattler 1972: 69). However an increasing awareness of the existence and importance of a population at large may be traced over the first decade of this century and seems to run parallel to discussions of political systems, educational needs, etc.

George V is emphatically portrayed as a man who, from his own personal experience, is conversant with the problems and feelings of his subjects, be they in the homeland or in the colonies. This knowledge derived from the fact that he had been among his people, was not remote as the Chinese now felt their own sovereign to be and, of course, as he was supposed to be according to orthodox Chinese thinking. George not only strives to obtain an understanding of the situation, he realises how vital people are to the strength of his

country. George III had lost part of his realm through his ignorance of circumstances and George V is determined not to repeat this mistake. This point must have been clear to Chinese readers, who would readily understand the dangers of ignoring the lessons of history. George, moreover, demands a proper respect for the patriotic spirit of the British abroad (*Yingqiao*) and is of the opinion that a proper harnessing of this spirit could help the country to flourish, and that negligence could weaken it. He is furthermore convinced that only a fair and polite attitude towards the native population of India will ensure that Britain will be able to govern that country. Yet he is willing to discuss the releasing of the British hold on other parts of the world, it would appear, since he allegedly supported peace negotiations with the Boers of South Africa. He is thus an acutely perceptive and discerning statesman.

Of particular interest here is the reference to British expatriates. Since the late nineteenth century, Chinese officials and then the Court had come to appreciate the value of the experience and know-how and, not least, the financial potential of overseas Chinese. From this time on, the Qing made numerous overtures to the Chinese overseas, trying at the turn of the century to make use of their superior knowledge in the modernisation of the country. Michael Godley's summary of the situation would seem quite apposite in this context:

As Westernized Chinese, men with practical knowledge of modern ways who still wished to identify with the traditional civilization, returning overseas merchants came as close as anyone to maintaining the precarious balance between Western techniques and Chinese principles long sought by Chang Chih-tung [Zhang Zhidong] and the self-strengtheners. (Godley 1975: 385)

Not until 1893 was the official Chinese ban on emigration lifted, but much before that, perceptive and active individuals had recognised the possible use and significance the overseas Chinese might have in the strengthening of the country, so that China could assume its rightful place within the world (Godley 1981: 60–73). As early as 1867, Ding Richang (Godley 1975: 363), a progressive official and supporter of the self-strengtheners, had advocated a kind of consular representation for the Chinese abroad and in the 1890s Huang Zunxian had considerably annoyed the crown representative in Singapore by issuing the local Chinese population with a kind of Chinese passport (Godley 1975: 369; Kamachi 1981: 185). They were, of course, crown subjects. In 1898, the consul general in

Singapore had called upon all educated Chinese of the area 'to look upon the Chinese empire as their future field of operations [. . .] to promote the regeneration of their native land.' (Godley 1975: 374) And it would appear that the overseas Chinese did just that.

From the turn of the century until the 1911 uprising, overseas Chinese poured literally millions of dollars into educational, charitable, industrial and commercial activities in China with the very aim of supporting or bolstering up the Qing government, their support for the Qing far outweighing any monies that may have been collected by the various revolutionaries undertaking fund-raising trips abroad (Godley 1975: 374). Prior to the Sino-Japanese war (1894–95), the Chinese abroad had already been financially involved in almost all 'modern' enterprises in China: railroads, shipping, public roads, aircraft, motor vehicles, telegraphy, mains water supplies, banking, insurance, tobacco, etc. (Huang 1978: 427) Aircraft is not such an anachronistic detail as it may appear at first: here balloons and airships are meant. It is worth mentioning at this point that *Xiaoshuo yuebao* takes up this topic in its first year as well; it introduces Xie Zuantai (1872–1937), the Chinese inventor [sic] of the airship (*Xiaoshuo yuebao* 1910:4). Xie may well have been the inventor of the Chinese airship, but the airship itself was not new to the world in 1910. The text itself does acknowledge this fact, but places this invention (for which Westerners had not had enough ingenuity to perfect) in a row with three other inventions that China had given to the world at large: gunpowder, the compass, and printing. Xie is not only an outstanding Chinese man of science, he is also an expatriate who had been born and had grown up in Australia (see also Xu 1991: 1578). The text may certainly be seen as a Chinese assertion of position in the modern scientific world, a world in which on 16th October 1910 – the very same month in which the article was published – the French firm of Clément-Bayard had managed for the first time to cross the English Channel in one of its airships (Schmitt and Schwipps 1990: 63). However, the text cannot be dealt with in any detail here; suffice it to say that expatriates seem to have become a source of interest to the publishing world at this time. *Dongfang zazhi* also had a regular feature on the situation of the Chinese abroad (*Huaqiao*). A large number of these active expatriates were able to enjoy privileges and rights normally only granted to Western powers (Godley 1975: 385).

This excursion into some of the aspects of the importance attached to overseas Chinese during the late nineteenth and early twentieth

centuries shows that readers would have been able to appreciate the import of George V's attitude to those of his subjects living abroad, and they would no doubt have seen the good sense behind it.

The text dealing with George V, moreover, points to further issues which were of central importance to concerned Chinese of the day. George is a statesman, but also a man of learning and culture. He is able to write and to speak well, both of which abilities presuppose – particularly for a Chinese readership – a broad learning. And precisely this is stated a few lines later: George 'combines a wealth of experience with extensive learning' (*shijian zhuozhu, xuewen hongfu*). This is particularly interesting in view of the lengthy discussions that had been taking place in China on the nature of the learning and education that would be required to improve the standing of the country *vis à vis* foreign powers and to establish the country within a modern, multi-national world. It ultimately cleared the way for the abolition of the traditional examination system in 1905. Yet it also led to the recognition of the value of practical abilities and the man of action as opposed to the scholar-bureaucrat whose virtue was to be guarantee of his beneficial, benevolent and competent administration. However, exhortations to new kinds of learning and attitudes had thus far been directed at those within the bureaucracy or hoping to join it, had been the stuff of debates about school curricula and teacher training. Here, it would seem, these criteria are being held up as a measure for judging a capable monarch. No longer is it of paramount importance that the eyes, ears, arms and legs (i.e. officials) of a national body assume a new quality of activity, understanding and function, the torso, the central organs of the body, must also achieve a new dynamism and present a fine balance of theoretical and practical attributes. Coupled with this is the fact that George also personifies the idea of the *mens sana in corpore sano* (the sound mind in a sound body). He is an excellent marksman, the second best in the country.⁶ Moreover George leads a regular life (*jie*) with no excesses, especially not in food and drink. If nothing else, traditional Chinese texts had always stressed the importance of moderation in all things, in speech, in dress, alcohol, and food. From the texts learned in childhood⁷ to manuals for district magistrates, not to mention such canonical texts as the *Shujing* (*Book of Documents*) or *Daxue* (*Great Learning*), the idea that the cultivated individual was self-disciplined and avoided excesses was a mainstay of traditional ideology. One may assume that the frequency of such admonitions was proof enough of a dire necessity for them, and their

significance would not have been lost on the educated Chinese reader.

The monarch presented here, then, is learned – sound in mind and body – and he is a good statesman. But this is not all. George is also a paragon of family virtue and competence and is generally admired for these qualities. He is versed in household matters (*Huang zhi jia you fang*), personally cares for his children whenever he has time (*jiaoyang zidi*) and enjoys the happiness of his family life. Now, one of the central texts of Confucianism, the *Great Learning*, is adamant about the fact that good government, personal integrity and an orderly family life must go hand in hand. This was an ideal and one which no doubt was understood simply as such – as a goal to aim for. Yet here, in the person of George V, we have an almost blemish-free picture, with much traditional vocabulary, of an ideal Confucian ruler, but one who is attuned to the requirements of the day. In fact, the only failing he appears to have is that he does tend to be somewhat dogmatic. Unfortunately no examples of this failing are given.

One final aspect of the text points to a further contemporary concern in China: military affairs. George is quoted as saying, 'At a time of competition between the countries of the world, the establishment of a naval force and experience in military affairs are of paramount importance.' Such a statement could quite conceivably have passed the lips of a Chinese statesman of the day. If it was true for a strong imperialist power like Great Britain, how much more should it apply to China?

The idea of a new type of naval force in China had originated at the time of the Taiping Rebellion. In 1853, Guo Songtao, at that time occupied with fighting the Taiping forces and later to be active in foreign service and attempts to mobilise the support of overseas Chinese, suggested setting up a Yangzi Navy to counteract the successes the Taipings had had with their fleet. His plans were taken over and put into action by Zeng Guofan (Huang 1972: 98–9). After various defeats at the hands of such naval powers as France and Britain in the late nineteenth century and after the humiliation of defeat by Japan (1895), many attempts were made to finance a sea-going fleet. In 1908 the Qing started a campaign amongst the Chinese in South-east Asia to raise money for naval construction. But despite there being some very large donations, the campaign for naval construction, like others of its kind, does not appear to have met with any great success (Godley 1975: 379).

General military restructuring had been a central concern with the Qing government since the defeat in the Sino-Japanese War and had made not a few advances under the capable direction of Yuan Shikai as Governor General of Zhili between 1901 and 1907. The incorporation of foreign technology, tactics and training had not only produced a capable fighting force (Beiyang Army), but it had also raised the status of the military man in Chinese eyes. The military now became an acceptable alternative to officialdom (MacKinnon 1980: 118). Moreover the military was indeed of paramount importance to the country at a time when, many believed, China ran the risk of being carved into pieces and shared out amongst the foreign powers. Theoretically the military aspects of statecraft had always been of importance: military skills (*wu*) were the complementary other half to the more literary-political skills (*wen*). The two belonged together, and it is there that we find them in the person of George V.

My intention with this discussion is to show that texts published in *Xiaoshuo yuebao* did have some contribution to make to contemporary social and political questions, some relationship to actual events of the day. This may seem to be a truism: how on earth, one might ask, can writers – particularly Chinese writers, who invariably have a sense of educational mission – exist and write outside the larger framework of their society? However, if we rely on secondary appraisals of the journal, this is just the impression we might come away with. Seeing them within the framework of their readers' and writers' preoccupations can give us a less one-sided view of the situation.

Yet there is doubtless a qualitative difference in these authors' approaches to their work (not necessarily in the quality of their writings). Those whose writings fall into the period prior to the May Fourth Movement, or the New Culture Movement – that is, roughly prior to 1915 – seem to be less willing to take a clear ideological stance, or they do not need to. There may be different reasons for this: first, they may have no ideological stance; or the socio-political situation of the day did not require one, since they wrote within a framework of general consensus which meant that they did not have to name their premises before each text. If there is no ideological proselytising, there is no need to convince readers with theoretical arguments. This is, of course, not to forget that many writers and publishers may just have wished to earn money or simply to entertain. Both motivations are a little out of place, however, within the Chinese

context of the day, since literary activity, writing in most forms, had always been linked with some formal, moral or educational function. Even the traditionally reviled (but nevertheless enjoyed and sometimes even highly regarded⁸) *xiaoshuo* were regaining a generally accepted social, moral, and political function since the beginning of the century.⁹ Even so, the study of 'mere entertainment' can in itself be a very rewarding one: what entertains a large public can tell us a good deal about the people being entertained, their basic assumptions and value judgements.

Such a lack of explicit political stance means that if we wish to assess the character of contributions to a particular, not overtly politically committed journal, we must look at each text on its own merits and try to establish the exact context in which it was written, to reconstruct the historical moment. This is what I have tried to do with the two texts presented in detail here. References in the texts discussed above to such matters as a constitutional monarch, a parliament, overseas nationals, military affairs, education and practical abilities in government were reflections of the issues of the day and would have struck a chord with the informed Chinese reader. As shown above, the question of a constitutional government was on everyone's minds¹⁰ and the texts dealing with the British monarchs must be seen within the context of the public¹¹ discourse on matters of national interest. They must also – as stated above – be placed within the context of contemporary publishing activities in Shanghai.

These two textual examples from the first issues of *Xiaoshuo yuebao* cannot, of course, suffice to maintain that the publication did not largely deal with the sentimental love story and the sex and crime adventure. I shall therefore, quite briefly, touch upon several other contributions, non-fictional and fictional, which would point to a greater socio-political interest and involvement in the contemporary discussion arena than has thus far been assumed. The texts are largely presented in a chronological order.¹²

- 1910: a short account of the fact that there is no lack of women who have gone into business in Europe and America and that many women actually own gold mines in the Yukon. They work beside men in the mines and have become very rich and financially independent. The question of mining in China was one which had directly occupied the thoughts of reformers since the Hundred-Day Reforms of 1898. Many provinces were working their own mines, and there were more than a few foreigners cashing in on

China's natural resources. Moreover, the question of women's financial independence was one that was becoming a matter of some interest and was to occupy many of the later May Fourth generation (see Mei Sheng 1923 for a representative survey of the various aspects of the discussion of the 'Women's Question'). Here the combination of the independent woman 'making it' in a very masculine and physical environment may have appeared both exotic and challenging to the reader.

- 1910: an account of women and divorce procedures in Britain. There are details of the number of women who have left their husbands and are living in separation without and with a formal separation order, the reasons for divorce or separation (madness, criminality, or simply no further wish to live with their partners) and how much it costs. Divorce for women was also to become one of the major topics of the women's movement in China and an ever recurrent topic in 'modern' journals and magazines (Mei Sheng 1923).
- 1910 and 1911: 'A Self-Governed Area' (*Zizhi difang*), a long fiction text (*changpian xiaoshuo*) by Chu Gou, describes how people take advantage of the new system of local government for their personal advancement and gain. A criticism of abuses of the late Qing system. The question of regional self-government and the relationship between the central government and the provinces in the years before and after the election of local assemblies (1909) was one of constant controversy and significance (Thompson 1995).
- 1911: a discussion of fiction in the West and in the East, including some very unfavourable comments on Japanese authors and Japanese writing. The art of narration is touched upon in a discussion of how good authors manage to portray real-life characters that the reader can believe in. There is a critical appraisal of the skill of various translations of foreign works and a comparison with the original works as well as a look at the relative merits of recent Chinese fictional works. This is interesting within the general discourse on the social function of the *xiaoshuo* in China. Here the reader is offered a critical survey of the field of fiction writing at the time on the basis of actual works without the often somewhat verbose theorising.

It would be beyond the scope of this article to look into this text within the context of the very lively debate about the role of fiction in society that had set in around the turn of the century. This complex

discussion has yet to be analysed in detail. Here it must suffice to say that, like other comparable publications, *Xiaoshuo yuebao* did publish articles which took up the thread of the discussion. Amongst other things, it published a series of six articles in 1912 ('Shuo xiaoshuo' ('On Fiction'); *Xiaoshuo yuebao* 1912: 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11) by one Guan Daru. These articles attempt a theoretical/philosophical framework for fictional writings before analysing all possible types of fiction according to form and content. After this more formal analysis, the reasons for fiction's popularity are discussed along with its strengths in order to determine the effects it can and does have within society. Finally an attempt is made to place *xiaoshuo* within the domain of the literary (*wenxue*). If we peruse the articles collected in A Ying 1960, we can see that all these themes had been the subject of debate since around 1900.

On a slightly different level, but definitely part of this debate, was a long series of articles (*Xiaoshuo yuebao* 1913: 1-9) which wished to trace the history of Chinese fiction from the very beginnings to the Qing period. This, to my knowledge, is the earliest attempt at a 'History of Chinese Fiction'. At the same time, *Xiaoshuo yuebao* published a historical survey of Western fictional literature. These texts, too, must be seen within the discussion of literature in general. But they also tell us more about attitudes and approaches to what had come to be known as literature (*wenxue*). It was now to be analysed and had become a subject for historical research. Moreover, such articles must be seen within a tendency in China from the early twentieth century to write general historical surveys of various subjects (histories of Chinese medicine, Western medicine, Buddhism in China, philosophy in both East and West, etc.) which was surely an important psychological step in the observation and changing perception (now with non-Chinese points of comparison and reference) of China's own cultural heritage.

- 1912: a discussion of famous generals since the founding of the Huai Army by Li Hongzhang in 1853. The text is a critical view of the military situation of China at the time, a call for new leaders of the type described in the text (examples are taken from past clashes with Western powers where the Chinese had fought valiantly or won) who would put a stop to the imperialist slicing up of the country and their claims to various spheres of influence. It is a call for a new patriotic national spirit. This text must also be seen against the background of its date of publication. In January 1912

the situation after the 1911 uprising was by no means clear. There were still negotiations taking place between representatives of the North and the South, and it is interesting to speculate just what political position the author was taking. It also reflects the growing sense of nationalism and patriotism that foreign observers of the time noted along with the 'developing martial spirit, as well as a noticeable shift in public opinion concerning the military profession.' (Powell 1955: 191)

- 1912: The short story 'Bloody Flowers' is a description of events and situations that actually took place in the provinces during the 1911 uprising. These are small events that had not been published elsewhere. The narrative is followed by a comment from the author, Yun Tieqiao, in which he attempts to distinguish between orthodox history (*zhengshi*), fiction (*xiaoshuo*) and what he is doing in his text, which is aiming at a fairly realistic impression of local events.
- 1913: 'The Worker's Story' (*Gongren xiaoshi*) by Yun Tieqiao.¹³ This unusually modern story in both form and content (A Ying 1988: 64ff; Trotter 1993: 31), quite realistically depicts the physical and mental lot of the Chinese industrial worker within the very personal story of one particular man.

'The Worker's Story' touches upon almost all the themes of the day: the inability of the traditional way of thinking and acting to deal with the problems of a new era; the question of trade unions and solidarity amongst workers; the exploitation of Chinese workers by foreign imperialists and Chinese opportunists; the position of women in society. This story may well deserve the epithet 'modern'; it deals with new social and political experiences, with which both individual and society must come to terms, of 'newly apprehended feelings' (Trotter 1993: 3). It does not spell out the terms (one is tempted to say à la May Fourth) under which these new elements in life should be accepted or rejected, but food for thought is certainly offered. The reader of *Xiaoshuo yuebao*, who presumably would have little if any direct contact with the workforce, is presented with a mirror-image of what is going on in this section of society, and the text makes it quite clear what the reasons for the situation are. It is a direct confrontation with reality and an indirect call for a careful consideration of the contemporary situation. This stance is typical of a number of Yun Tieqiao's writings, particularly of his article of 1915 which discusses the place of the love story within the context of Chinese writing and,

more importantly, of social and political developments (Gimpel 1994). This text, too, must be included in *Xiaoshuo yuebao*'s contribution to the general discussion of fiction in society (see above).

It has, I hope, become clear that a close and contextual reading of the texts published in the early years of the journal *Xiaoshuo yuebao* can tell us much about the topics of concern to an important albeit somewhat select portion of Chinese society at the time, can show that its contributors did not all share the view that 'the principle aesthetic criterion for any writing was that it had to be entertaining' (Gálik 1961: 48. Gálik is specifically referring to the early years of *Xiaoshuo yuebao* here.) Contrary to what is usually assumed, we can find in such journals a great deal more socially concerned writing, of both a fictional and non-fictional nature, prior to the May Fourth Movement. We must simply not expect each socially committed or critical text to be labelled as such by the authors of this particular period in Chinese literary history. We might see this kind of literary work within the framework of the functions attributed to both author and sociologist by the literary sociologist Leo Lowenthal:

It is one of the functions of the writer as well as the sociologist to describe and label new experience. Only after such creative tasks have been performed can the majority of people recognize and become articulate about their predicament. (Lowenthal 1961: xv)

We cannot hope to gain any useful insights into the literary field in China in the first decade and a half of this century if our information about the primary material is in essence wrong or simply misleading. Therefore my aim here has been to contribute some results from the study of the journal *Xiaoshuo yuebao* to the larger panorama of printing and publishing in the early years of this century in China. As the title suggests, these results are far from being complete or systematic, but when we do have systematic and reliable studies, and not just for such maligned publications, we shall be able to undertake the important task of comparing one contemporary publication with the other and *subsequently* of assessing the significance of each within a broader literary field which we will then, no doubt, understand better.

Notes

- 1 Bourdieu's is, however, not a lone voice in the wilderness, although he may have brought together many ideas which have been fruitfully

- informing the work of literary historians for some time (see for instance Lowenthal 1961, Trotter 1993).
- 2 The question of who actually read *Xiaoshuo yuebao* cannot, of course, be answered with any exactness. However, we must presuppose a relatively broad spectrum of educated men and women of all age groups.
 - 3 Wood, Ellen, née Price, better known as Mrs. Henry Wood (1814–87). One of the most popular authors of the day.
 - 4 It is almost impossible, if not by coincidence, to locate the original text of this article, which presumably was in English. However, this is largely irrelevant for the present purposes, as the question is not what and how translation was done, nor whether the picture presented actually corresponded to the historical George or Edward, but rather what was being published as a depiction of the personality and activities of the British king for a Chinese readership.
 - 5 Such comments were also common within traditional criticism. Yet the ruler was not expected to go out amongst his people but to employ more competent advisers.
 - 6 Here it is tempting to speculate that the Chinese reader may have attached some significance to such skill, given the importance of archery in texts such as the *Liji*, see Couvreur 1899: Tome I, 2me Partie, pp. 668–80. However, this skill may have been somewhat neglected in practice. Perhaps this is just a general reference to the man of action, learning and culture.
 - 7 Such texts as *Sanzi jing* (*The Three Character Classic*), *Qianzi wen* (*The Thousand Character Text*), *Taigong jiajiao* (*Great-grandfather's Instructions*) stress these matters. See Giles 1964; Paar 1963; Demieville 1982; Qiao 1991.
 - 8 See, for instance, Jin Shengtan's (1610–1661) commentary on *Sanguo yanyi* (*The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*), translated in Rolston 1990: 153–95.
 - 9 Since Liang Qichao's article on fictional literature and the governing of society ('Lun xiaoshuo yu qunzhi zhi guanxi' (On the Relationship Between Fiction and the Government of the People)) of 1902 (translated in full in Denton 1996: 74–81). Numerous other articles extolling the political and social miracles to be worked by fiction are to be found in A Ying 1960.
 - 10 By everyone I do not mean literally every person in China. Everyone may be taken to mean all those with the ability to express themselves: educated gentlemen and ladies, members of the military, members of educational and commercial groups, students.
 - 11 Again, the term 'public' must be treated with some care. Apart from public meetings, most of this discourse took place in the form of writing. Thus this public is an exclusive and not an inclusive one, since only those who had the ability to read the relatively difficult texts could participate.
 - 12 The seven texts discussed below are (authors mentioned where known): 'Furen kaikuang zhi xin yingye' ('A New Occupation for Women: Mining'), *Xiaoshuo yuebao* 1910, 3: 315; 'Lihun zhi jiazhi' ('The Price of Divorce'), 1901, 3: 316; Chu Gou, 'Zizhi difang' ('A Self-Governed Area'), 1910, 6: 569–589 and 1911, 1: 687–710; Tong Sheng, 'Xiaoshuo

conghua' ('Notes on Fiction'), 1911, 3: 931-933; Shan Kai, 'Huaijun houqi zhi mingjian tan' ('Famous Generals Since the [Founding of the] Huai Army'), 1912, 1: 2131-2136; Jiaomu [Yun Tiejiao], 'Xuehua' ('Bloody Flowers'), 1912, 4: 2373-2384; Jiaomu [Yun Tiejiao], 'Gongren xiaoshi' ('The Worker's Story'), 1913, 7: 4001-7. All page numbers refer to the Japanese reprint (see *Bibliography*).

- 13 For a full-length German translation of this story and an analysis of its contents, see Gimpel 1993.

Playing the Field

Aspects of Chinese Literary Life in the 1920s

Michel Hockx

Introduction

The founding of the Literary Association (*Wenxue yanjiu hui*), in the beginning of the 1920s, marks a crucial phase in the development of modern Chinese literature (see Hockx 1998b). Creative writing in *baihua* and in the genres (poetry, fiction, drama and essay) encompassed by the newly imported notion of *wenxue* (literature) can in those years be seen to complete a movement out of the Beijing university campuses, and the 'general interest' magazines published there, and into the Shanghai 'literary field', and the literary publications produced by the larger publishing houses there, foremost of all the Commercial Press (*Shangwu yinshuguan*). In this chapter, I shall highlight various aspects of that literary field, and the way in which it developed after the new literature had entered into it. The overview will be anecdotal, focusing on the different kinds of information to be obtained from different sources.

Wenren and wengai: the emergence of a dualistic structure

Through a 'double disavowal'¹ both of classical *wenyan* writing and of popular fiction, and through an emphatic approval of and identification with Western literature and modern Japanese literature, translations of which had already been part of the literary field since the 1880s, the producers of 'new literature' managed, within an amazingly short period of time, to create a new 'sub-field'. With the gradual fading away of classical writing as a form of *production*, that

sub-field quickly grew to become the dominant half of a literary field with a 'dualistic structure'. This can be illustrated by, for instance, looking at the development of the Shanghai *New Times* supplement called *Wenxue xunkan* (*Literature Trimonthly*), later *Wenxue* (*Literature*) and yet later *Wenxue zhoubao* (*Literature Weekly*) (hereafter *Literature Weekly*). With its life span covering the years 1921–1929, and its issues appearing once a week, it is an important source of information on Chinese literature of the 1920s. During the first two years of its existence it carried a great number of polemical articles against 'old' literature and against 'pulp fiction'. However, during the last two years or so before its demise, classical writing had become an object of study instead of an object of attack, while aggression against popular fiction writers had remained. The distinction that was made between *wenren* ('men of letters', 'literati')², for whom literature was a serious business, and *wengai* ('beggars of letters', 'hackney writers') for whom it was merely business, clearly outlines the nature of the dualism. The new literature had become high literature, produced and consumed by the intellectual élite, and immersed in a practice of which one of the main rules stated that one should not write for money, but for a type of capital that was largely symbolic.

The success story of new literature leads us to suspect that a big change in *taste* was taking place (or had taken place) among the educated élite of this period. The foundation for this change is most likely to have been laid by a combination of native developments, such as the rise of the novel in the Ming and the Qing, and foreign influence, not only in terms of translation of literary works, but also in terms of views and concepts of literature. Most important in this respect, however, is the reform of the education system shortly after the turn of the century, which created the conditions for the reproduction of that taste, and its inculcation into the habitus of a new generation of intellectuals.

For this generation, literature was only one of various subjects of learning presented in school, and given the fact that the imperial examinations belonged to the past, it is likely that emphasis shifted from teaching the reproduction of classical models as a basic skill, to reading both classical Chinese and (translations of) modern Western texts, leaving the production of new works of literature to those who felt attracted to textual work. Literary talent changed from being a form of cultural capital, convertible in many fields into political and other forms of power, to being a form of symbolic capital, of value within the field of literature only.

The relationship between the new education and the new literature is an intimate one, and it stayed intimate during most of the 1920s. Not only were the new writers, readers and critics educated in new-style schools (or in foreign schools, or both), but after graduation they almost invariably returned to those schools or universities as professors, or procured jobs in the 'editing and translating offices' (*bianyi suo*) of large publishing houses, where no small amount of their time was taken up by the editing and translating of high-school and college textbooks. It is not until the 1930s that writing literature became so lucrative that most well-known writers needed no other source of income on the side, and still did not run the risk of being called 'beggars of letters'.³

Concentrating on the sub-field of high literature, the following agents deserve attention: the writer, the editor and the publisher. My discussion of the writer focuses on available sources, while the editor is treated as a 'position' within the field. The section on publishing concentrates on the role and function of literary societies.

The writer: diaries and letters

Most of the writers of new literature active in the 1920s came into contact with literature while in school, as mentioned above. It was not always a direct contact, in the sense that modern literature was one of the subjects on the curriculum; there were also indirect ways. The popularity of magazines like *New Youth* in the late 1910s among students of institutes of higher education, flocking together in 'peer groups'⁴, was another, more indirect way in which new literature came to the schools. Yet another way is described by Guo Moruo in his reminiscences of his student days in Japan. Guo, as is well known, was a student of medicine. Students of medicine at his university in Japan were required to study three foreign languages: German, English and Latin. The teaching was done by graduates from Japanese foreign-language institutes, who were far from familiar with medicine, and often used literary texts as teaching materials. Guo Moruo's first encounter with the work of Goethe, for instance, took place in the context of one of those classes (Guo 1933: 76). Lu Xun's knowledge of German and avid readings in foreign literature in German translation, as well as his decision to study German after he had discarded medicine, undoubtedly had the same cause.

For those young Chinese students in high schools, teachers' academies and universities inside and outside China, new literature,

including foreign literature (which was just as 'new') was a cult, and there were plenty of cult heroes: Goethe, Byron, Whitman, Shelley, Tagore, but also Hu Shi, Lu Xun and Zhou Zuoren, the main precursors of the movement. One of the first steps taken by many young writers in those days was to send their work to one of those 'heroes' and ask them to 'correct' it. Thus, even if the hero in question did not happen to be a teacher at the school of the youngster in question, a teacher-student relation would none the less be established, which had some effect on the structure of the literary field, if we are to believe the following remark by Hong Weifa, quoted by Guo Moruo:

If you want to become a force in Chinese cultural circles, you have to get into education. Chinese people are products of feudal thinking. As soon as they have attended a one hour's class by you, there will be a teacher-student relationship, and they will support you, and call you 'Sir' and themselves 'Your Pupil'. If you only express your ideas in writing, no matter how deeply they are impressed by it, they won't breathe a word of it, and one moment they will call you 'brother', the other they will scold you to death. Nothing is to be gained by that. (Guo 1938: 63-4)

Hong Weifa commented on the beneficial aspects of the teacher-student relationship from the perspective of the teacher, but there was also a lot 'in it' for the student. The well-known poet Wang Jingzhi, whose Anhui family was connected through various marriages with the family of Hu Shi, is known to have sent much of his early work to Hu, as well as to Zhou Zuoren and Lu Xun, whereas his teachers at Hangzhou No. 1 Teachers' Academy were Zhu Ziqing, Ye Shengtao and Liu Yanling. Not only were all those 'teachers' kind enough to return his letters and comment on or correct his work, they were also, in all likelihood, instrumental in his having his first poems published in *Xin chao* and *Xiaoshuo yuebao* at the age of 19 (in 1921), which made him the most famous student in the school, earned him the nickname *shiren* ('The Poet') and instigated the establishment of a literary society for Hangzhou students, named after a line from one of his poems.⁵ At a time when the young, yet famous, founders of the Creation Society, like Guo Moruo, Yu Dafu and Tian Han, had all sorts of problems finding a publisher for their *Creation Quarterly*, Wang Jingzhi had no problem whatsoever getting his very controversial collection of outspoken love

poems, *Hui de feng* (*Orchid Wind*), published by Yadong – which just happened to be the publisher of all of Hu Shi's books. *Orchid Wind* carried introductions by Hu Shi, Zhu Ziqing and Liu Yanling, and, when a conservative young critic called Hu Menghua dared call Wang's poems 'immoral', he was bullied into silence by scathing attacks by, among others, Zhou Zuoren and Lu Xun (cf. Hockx 1996). Before long, Wang had become a cult hero himself, and, according to his own account of the period, he was the object of sexual desire of young students at girls' schools where he taught all through the 1920s (Wang 1996: 132–61).

Wang Jingzhi's reputation and the way it affected his life has become known to me through a collection of autobiographical poems about his love life, which he kept on a shelf for 60 years. The two examples concerning Guo Moruo were also taken from autobiographical works. A more matter-of-fact impression of the life of writers can be obtained by looking at their diaries and at their correspondence, if these have been preserved, reprinted and published.

Diaries come in all shapes and sizes, but there are really only two types: the non-informative and the informative. The oldest Zhou brothers – Lu Xun and Zhou Zuoren – were masters of the non-informative diary. In fact, their diaries are so much alike in style and in the kind of content that is included, that it can be assumed they were keeping up a family tradition, which taught them to write a few lines every day, in order to keep a record of one's activities. Zhou Zuoren's diary for the years around 1920 contains a wealth of information for meteorologists: the weather is reported twice a day, every day. One also learns from the diary who visited him and from whom he received letters. Unfortunately, the diary does not mention what was in the letters, or what happened during the visits.

On May 4th, 1919, which was an eventful day according to our history books, Lu Xun, who was living in Beijing at the time, noted in his usual terse style that the day had been cloudy, that it was a Sunday holiday, that he had been to a funeral and offered three *yuan* to the deceased, and that (Sun) Fuyuan and Liu Bannong had visited him, the latter bringing him two books (Lu Xun 1981, Vol. 14: 355). His brother Zhou Zuoren was in Japan at the time and it is not quite clear when he heard the news about the May Fourth Incident, which made him decide to return to China right away. His diary mentions that he bought a boat ticket on May 6th. I assume, therefore, that he heard the news either on May 4th, when he noted in his diary that it was a

sunny day and his wife had taken the kids to the park, or on May 5th, when the diary reports getting a hair cut and buying two books (Zhou 1984: 215).

Uninformative as they may be, reading the Zhou brothers' diaries does strengthen the impression that they were relatively well-to-do, socially and culturally active intellectuals. Besides working and teaching, they seem to have spent most of their time reading, corresponding and entertaining guests. They kept informed about literary matters not only by reading Chinese and foreign newspapers and magazines, but also by consulting catalogues of foreign bookstores (mainly in Japan, but also in Europe) and ordering books through the mail. The idea that they were not exactly poor is confirmed by the sheer size of the Badaowan mansion, where the entire Zhou family lived in the early 1920s, before Lu Xun and Zhou Zuoren had their famous quarrel. Nowadays, there are about 60 families living there.⁶ If they were never pressed for money, the diaries show that they were probably often pressed for time. Because of their status, they not only had to answer piles of 'fan mail', but they were also doing a lot of writing on request and fighting against terrible deadlines. Zhou Zuoren's diary seldom mentions him working on one and the same essay, poem or translation for more than two days: one day to write, and one day to make a clean copy.

The more informative types of diary, like, for instance, Hu Shi's *Overseas Diary* (Hu 1986) or Yu Dafu's *Nine Diaries* (Yu 1992: 35–233) go much further in familiarising the reader/researcher with what the writer is thinking, reading and writing. Yu Dafu's diary entries for 1927, when he had gone from Guangzhou to Shanghai in order to clean up the financial mess at the Creation Society, depicts the poor protagonist very vividly: putting in long hours to put the magazines (*Chuangzao yuekan* (*Creation Monthly*) and *Hongshui* (*Deluge*)) to bed, torn between hope and fear in his relationship with Wang Yingxia, vowing to himself to stop drinking and start doing some real hard work almost every other day, doubting the quality of his long-term friendship with Guo Moruo and Cheng Fangwu. All this has been described in great detail and with great sensitivity by Leo Ou-fan Lee in *The Romantic Generation of Modern Chinese Writers* (Lee 1973: 94–9). Yet, what is interesting from the present perspective is that even Yu Dafu is non-informative about certain crucial issues in his diary. For instance, he never makes it really clear what was going on within the Creation Society that took up so much of his attention. After he met with the youngsters running the Society's publishing

department, he each time entrusted to his diary that 'young people in China nowadays are hopeless' and 'all they care about is money', and words in similar vein (Rao 1985: 416–33). To find out what the real problem was, however, and what caused the famous split in the famous society, one has to consult not Yu Dafu's diary, but an article he published in 1928 (Rao 1985: 1066–72).

A similar division between informative and non-informative can be made in the case of letters. In that case, the division was made by one of the agents involved, namely by Zhou Zuoren, in the following passage from the introduction to his 1933 collection of letters *Zhou Zuoren shuxin* (*Zhou Zuoren's Letters*):

The content of this collection can be divided into two parts: *shu* and *xin*. [. . .] There are 21 *shu* in it [. . .], common *shu*, with some lingering shortcomings, because they were meant in advance to be published [so that] there is a lot of false talk (*jiahua*) and public talk (*gonghua*) in there, and relatively little private talk (*sihua*) and true talk (*zhenhua*). [. . .] As far as *xin* are concerned, I do not believe that they have more value than *shu*, but they are at least a bit more honest, because they were written more loosely (*suibian*) (Zhou 1992: 37).

Even without making such a formal distinction, it is quite likely that the average 1920s intellectual involved in new literature would think twice about what he wrote in letters to colleagues. There are plenty of examples of letters getting published in literary periodicals without the authors' prior consent, simply because the editor (usually the person to whom the letter was sent in those cases) considered (part of) the content of the letter to be of extreme importance to some debate that just happened to be going on. Certain correspondences between key figures within the 1920s literary scene even became as popular and widely read as the fiction or poetry written by those figures. An example in point is the correspondence between Guo Moruo, Zong Baihua and Tian Han, published in 1920 under the title *San ye ji* (*Three Leaves*), which sold extremely well, and acquainted large numbers of readers with the romantic view of literature held by those young writers who were at the time all studying in Japan. It is even possible that the whole correspondence was started with the sole aim of getting it published. Guo Moruo reminisced that, shortly after the successful publication of the book, he received a request from Zheng Boqi to set up another 'triangular correspondence', with Zheng taking Zong Baihua's place, to be

published in book form afterwards. Other examples of popular letter collections are the correspondence between Lu Xun and Xu Guangping, entitled *Liang di shu* (*Letters From Two Places*; 1933)⁷, and the poet Zhu Xiang's 106 letters to his wife, sent while he was in the United States, published under the title *Haiwai ji Ni jun* (*Sent To Miss Ni From Abroad*; 1934).

Even though the majority of letters available to us now were written for or edited before publication, they can still be of value for the study of writers' practice, if only because they inform us about 'who was talking to whom', pointing up the existence of relationships and networks, as in the case of *New Tide*-poet Kang Baiqing's correspondence with *Lakeside*-poet Ying Xiuren, which provides evidence of an otherwise unexpected link between the 'Beijing aggregate' and the 'Shanghai aggregate', and led, among other things, to the publication of the *1919 nian xin shi nianxuan* (*1919 Annual Selection of New Poetry*), an important source for the study of early modern poetry (Lou and Zhao 1982: 214–15; Hockx 1994: 49). If occupying a position within the literary field involves entering into relations with agents in similar and other positions, studying correspondence can aid our understanding of those relations. The example of the teacher–student relations leads me to believe that such relations, and the collective agency resulting from it, are typical of the modern Chinese literary field and an important difference when compared to the French literary field described by Bourdieu.

The editor's position

In the previous section I mentioned that many literary writers in the 1920s were professionally occupied as editors. If we include the editorial activities of those writers who had other sources of income as well, then one is hard put to find a single well-known writer of the period who was not involved in editing at least one literary magazine for a period of time.⁸ The editing of literary supplements, which naturally involved more work since they appeared at more regular intervals, was less often done by writers. In any case, it must be stated at the outset that when talking about writers and editors, we are talking about different positions within the literary field, but not necessarily about different people. The question in this section is whether the writer-editor displayed different behaviour when in the editor position.

To provide a preliminary answer, a brief look at two texts by Xu Zhimo is enlightening. In his manifesto on the attitude of the

'Crescent Moon' group, published under the name of the Crescent Moon Society, there is an interesting passage where the intellectual world of the time is compared to a market, where the following thirteen vendors are selling their goods:

- 1 the sentimentalists (*ganshang pai*);
- 2 the decadents (*tuifei pai*);
- 3 the aestheticists (*weimei pai*);
- 4 the utilitarianists (*gongli pai*);
- 5 the moralists (*xunshi pai*);
- 6 the aggressors (*gongji pai*);
- 7 the extremists (*pianji pai*);
- 8 the refined (*xianqiao pai*);
- 9 the pornographers (*yinhui pai*);
- 10 the fanatics (*kuangre pai*);
- 11 the charlatans (*baifan pai*);
- 12 the motto-ists (*biaoyu pai*);
- 13 the ism-ists (*zhuyi pai*) (Xinyue she 1928).

The author then continues to explain why the Crescent Moon attitude is different from all of the above. This is a classical case of 'position-taking' by literary producers in the Bourdieuan sense. The brilliant Xu Zhimo and his fellow-Crescentists, having spent considerable time in literary circles at home and abroad, being well acquainted with members of various groups and generations within the field, possessing a considerable amount of investment capital, both in terms of habitus and in terms of financial independence, displaying their enormous 'feel for the field', carried out a thirteen-fold disavowal in order to create a new position, which they characterised with the words 'healthy' (*jiankang*) and 'dignified' (*zunyan*).

The Xu Zhimo who took up the function of editor of the *Morning News* literary supplement in 1925 did not take the same position. In the article setting out his views on the future of the famous supplement, one of the 'Four Big Supplements' (*si da fukan*), he assumes the role of mediator between the editors-in-chief of the newspaper and the prospective contributors to the supplement. He makes a point of proclaiming an absolutely open editorial policy, not excluding any one group, and promises to do his best to get decent compensations for his contributors, but warns them that he might not be able to persuade his bosses (Xu 1925).

The case of Mao Dun (Shen Yanbing), who was an editor for the Commercial Press during most of the 1920s, further illustrates the

talents of mediation, co-operation and diplomacy that were essential for the successful editor. In a reminiscence, he describes his time at the Commercial Press as 'complex and intense living, studying and struggling' (Mao Dun 1985). Even though Mao Dun's account, originally published in 1979, is likely to be somewhat exaggerated and/or politicised, his description of his first years as editor of *Xiaoshuo yuebao* gives a good impression of the problems the new literature ran into during and after its entrance into the Shanghai publishing houses. Reading Mao Dun's reminiscence, the Commercial Press comes to look like a miniature copy of the dualistically structured literary field. Whereas the editors working in the *bianyi suo* (editing and translation bureau) were regularly involved in translating, had much contact with foreign literature, and were thus inclined to support the new literature, the editors involved in classical Chinese literature and the highly profitable 'butterfly fiction' were very much afraid of the competition. For a while, as is well known, this resulted in the Commercial Press publishing both a leading new literature magazine – *Xiaoshuo yuebao* (*Short Story Monthly*) and an anti-new literature magazine – *Xiaoshuo shijie* (*Short Story World*), the two of them vying for the favour of the reader, just like their editors were vying for the favour of the Commercial Press bosses. Meanwhile, the lay-out of the two competing magazines was almost exactly the same, from cover to colophon, the only difference being that the pictures of famous foreign paintings in *Short Story Monthly* had become famous Shanghai courtesans in *Short Story World*. And finally, since both of the magazines were published by the Commercial Press, advertisements for other Commercial Press publications had to appear in their pages. Thus, surprising as it may seem, each issue of *Short Story World* at the time carried an advertisement for *Short Story Monthly* and vice versa.

The complicated situation at the Commercial Press, and the relatively manifold restraints on editorial freedom created by the faction struggles in the editorial rooms, were compensated by relatively high wages. This is at least the impression one gets from Guo Moruo's memoirs. According to Guo, he was approached many times by Commercial Press executives, with ever more generous offers of payment he could receive if he were to become a full-time or even part-time or freelance editor or translator in their service. Guo refused their offers for several years and for several reasons, one of which was the Commercial Press's reputation of censuring their editors and not allowing them to publish anything too offending. Guo

emphasised, however, that the money he would have earned, had he accepted the offer, would have solved his financial problems almost immediately.⁹

Was the continued antagonism between the representatives of pulp fiction and the proponents of new literature really nothing but rivalry between competing editors working for the same bosses, or were the divergent views of literature what caused the rivalry in the first place? The answer to this question is that the question itself is wrong. Both the professional competition and the conflicting views are materialisations of the agents' position within the literary field. In Bourdieu's words, it is best 'to view this circle as a circle' (Bourdieu 1992: 312) and conclude that, in any case, the position of editor was an influential one in the literary field of 1920s' China.

As mentioned above, the editing of a literary supplement to a newspaper required more of a commitment from the editor, which is why they were often edited by editors with less literary aspirations.¹⁰ One of the most successful and influential people in the literary field of the 1920s whose main occupation was editing was Zheng Zhenduo. Zheng edited a number of Commercial Press publications, as well as *Xue deng* (*Study Lamp*), another one of the Four Big Supplements. The latter was edited for an even longer period of time by Ke Yicen, who, though being a member of the Literary Association, held the pages of *Study Lamp* open to members of the Creation Society even when hostilities between the two societies broke out in late 1922. One can come across advertisements for the Association organ *Literature Weekly* and the Creation Society organ *Creation Quarterly* printed next to each other on the same page of the supplement. Nevertheless, one refusal of an article by Creationist Cheng Fangwu was enough for the Creationists to lump Ke Yicen and *Study Lamp* together as Literary Association marionettes, and expand their own editing and publishing activities to include a weekly and a daily.¹¹ Naturally, the money to keep up all those publications had to come from somewhere and therefore the Creation Society's publications started to carry more advertisements. While Creationists were doing their very best to discredit the translations of foreign literature published in *Literature Weekly*, advertisements for that supplement are to be found in many an issue of their periodicals.

As the literary field grew in size, the influence of the newspaper supplements and its editors dwindled. The supplements either became independent (such as *Literature Weekly* in 1925), or less involved in literary issues. More literary magazines were founded, and

often edited under full control of groups of writers, without much interference from publishing houses. Meanwhile, the publishing business was undergoing some big changes itself.

Publishers and literary societies

The study of publishing houses in May Fourth China is still relatively underdeveloped, even though it is possible nowadays to unearth many of the necessary materials. The only exception is, again, the Commercial Press, which is the topic of a number of collections of memoirs published in Mainland China, and of a model study by the French Sinologist Jean-Pierre Drège (1978). A number of points made by Drège are useful to repeat in the present context.

Drège has drawn attention to the fact that most publishing houses in May Fourth China were all-encompassing business, responsible not only for the buying and editing of manuscripts, but also for printing, distribution and sales. The Commercial Press, for instance, not only had its own editing and translation department, as we have seen above, but also its own printing factory, its own network of bookstores, and even its own library and its own school. Drège claims that this kind of structure, which was copied by most other publishing houses, especially the Commercial Press's main competitors Zhonghua shuju and Shijie shuju, caused the Chinese publishing houses to be very commercial in their attitude, and more sensitive to the laws of market economy than, for instance, their Western counterparts.

In the case of the Commercial Press, its commercial attitude is not only displayed by the above-mentioned reluctance to publishing politically or morally 'sensitive' materials, but, much more generally, by the structure of its entire list of publications. A look at statistics that have been made for the period 1902–1950 shows that 30% of books published by the Commercial Press were in the field of 'social sciences' and 17.5% in 'science and technology'. 'Literature' was responsible for 17% of its output, but a look at the content of the literature section shows that only a very small part of that was taken up by new literature. Most literary works published by the Commercial Press were Chinese classics and translations of foreign literature, catering to the tastes of old and young, without much commercial risk attached.¹²

For a short while in the early 1920s, the pact between the Commercial Press and the Literary Association virtually limited the whole new literature scene to one group of buildings along Shanghai's

Baoshanlu. One must credit Guo Moruo and Yu Dafu and the other founders of the Creation Society with ending this short-lived monopoly, whereas it would have been easy for them, after the initial success of their poems and short stories, to acquire a position in those buildings as well. Due to a number of personal conflicts and misunderstandings, caused to some degree by the different life-style and different tastes that the Creationists had acquired during their long stay in Japan¹³, and due to the close friendship between Guo, Yu, Cheng Fangwu and Zhang Ziping, the number of positions within the field doubled: within a year after the emergence of its establishment, the field had obtained its first avant-garde.

The Taidong shuju, the small Shanghai publishing house that gave the Creationists their 'break' must have been especially happy with 'catching' Guo Moruo, to whom they offered a job and a place to live and travel funds every time he needed to return to Japan. Especially after his collection of poetry *Nüshen* (*The Goddesses*; 1921) was published by Taidong, he possessed a considerable amount of symbolic capital, which seems to have been the Creationist's main asset. Even if their periodicals did not look half as nice as those published by the Commercial Press, and were not distributed half as widely, they had the most popular poet of the time. The early issues of *Creation Quarterly* not only contain much of Guo's work, including the long poem 'Creation' which opens the first issue, they also contain quoted adages by Guo Moruo scattered all over the pages.

Before long, they discovered another 'asset', namely their knowledge of foreign languages, especially Guo Moruo's German, Cheng Fangwu's English and Jing Yinyu's (1902–1930¹⁴) French. Even though their views of literature did not differ as much from those of the Literary Association members as the often quoted (but hardly used) slogans 'art for life's sake' and 'art for art's sake' seem to imply, the translation skills of the Creationists were clearly superior. I certainly did not check every example mentioned in the lengthy criticisms of Literary Association Series translations by Creation Society members, but those that I did examine showed without exception that the Creationists not only understood the original language better, but were also able to translate the passages in question with much more feel for the stylistic and rhythmic qualities of the original.¹⁵

In the years between 1922 and 1925, the example set by the Creation Society was followed by many. Small publishing houses all over the country entrusted literary publications to groups of friends,

calling themselves a *she* (society) or *hui* (association), and the journals were often so-called *tongren zazhi*, the term *tongren* referring to ties of friendship or comradeship, rather than to official membership of some organisation. Invariably, the *tongren* would be largely responsible for filling the pages of the magazine, but also for editing it, and sometimes even for its distribution, as can be easily learned by looking at the colophons of the journals in question. For publishing houses, hiring a 'literary society' was like hiring a couple of extra hands.

From 1926 onwards, however, the Creation Society again instigated a change in the literary field, when it managed to establish its own publishing house, called the *Chuangzao she chubanbu* (Creation Society Publishing Department). Born out of dissatisfaction with their experience with the Taidong company, where they felt their strenuous editing efforts were poorly remunerated, and out of a general discontent with the publishing business at the time¹⁶, they managed to set up a small editing and printing shop *cum* bookstore in Shanghai. To do so, they had no choice but to give up the *tongren* character of their society, and for the first time we see mention of *sheyuan* (society members), and of bylaws and committees. The backbone of the publishing house, however, were what was called the 'shareholders' (*gudong*). Shares were sold at five *yuan* each. For that money, shareholders would receive a discount when buying books at the attached bookstore, and they would also be allowed to hand in their own manuscripts for publication, for which they would receive extra royalties if the manuscript was accepted and printed. Within a year, the publishing department opened up several branches in other cities, which mainly served as distributing points, but were also active in recruiting new shareholders.

The list of shareholders published in 1927¹⁷ counts 397 names of mostly unknown individuals (although we are surprised to find the names of Literary Association member Wang Yiren and former *Lakeside* poet Ying Xiuren). An earlier list of 156 shareholders¹⁸ shows that they came from cities all over the country. It seems that, by this time, the reputation of the Creation Society had been big enough to bring together thousands of *yuan*, enough to edit, publish and distribute various series of books and two periodicals (*Deluge* and *Creation Monthly*). Of these two, the latter was the official, 'purely literary' organ of the 'pure literary society' called the Creation Society, whereas the former, *Deluge*, was edited by a group of younger writers, who proclaimed more than once in the pages of their organ

that they were not all members of the Creation Society and that *Deluge* was not a Creation Society organ, even though it was perceived as such by the outside world and is still perceived as such by most scholars. The following quote makes it clear why the editors of *Deluge* had chosen to make that impression, and is another piece of evidence of the reputation that had been gained over the years by the Creation Society:

The editors declare once more that *Deluge* is a little child, boldly and recklessly brought into this world by us, a couple of youngsters, and certainly not all contributors are members of the Creation Society. However, because the majority are members and the others sympathise with the Creation Society, we decided to use the name of the Creation Society . . .¹⁹

As was perhaps to be expected, these younger society members, most of whom were responsible for keeping the shop in Shanghai running, while the leadership of the society was in Guangzhou, were soon to take the position of the avant-garde, just like their elders had done five years before. Calling themselves the *xiao huoji* (hired hands) of the publishing department, they started their own magazine, called *A 11* and later *Huanzhou* (*Oasis*), paying for its production with Creation Society money, but saving the income from advertisements and the like in the name of the 'Oasis Society', which almost led to a bankruptcy of the Creation Society. This was the reason why Yu Dafu went to Shanghai in 1927. Unfortunately for him, his attempts to set matters straight only led to a schism in the society, and finally to his cutting off all ties with his former friends. The Creation Society publishing department stayed open until the end of the 1920s, when it was closed by order of the Guomindang government, for spreading Communist propaganda. Although the Society even hired a lawyer to put announcements in the newspapers, stating that the Creation Society was a purely literary society and that anyone claiming otherwise would be sued for libel²⁰, their symbolic capital was unable to outweigh the political power exercised by the new government.

Conclusion

The writers of the 1920s were students, professional educators or professional editors, who wrote literary work mainly in their spare time. By writing so-called new literature, they adopted a position

within the literary field of the time, which was dualistically structured around an opposition between high and low literature. The sub-field of high literature grew steadily during the 1920s as new positions were continuously introduced, often on the basis of foreign examples. The major distinction within the sub-field was that between young and old, establishment and avant-garde. However, there are also vertical ties connecting the two poles, in the form of teacher-student relationships. These ties, and their relationship to networks in which individual writers partook, can be studied by looking at writers' diaries and correspondence. During the 1920s, there is a tendency for writers to get involved more and more in editing and publishing. This can be seen as a response to the business style of the big publishing houses. If publishers were prone to hire editors who were also writers, and basically attempted to control the entire process of production of literary works, writers were similarly eager to increase their independence by taking control over the editing and publishing of their work. Writers usually did not communicate with publishers as individuals, but only as literary societies (*she*). *She* could mean any of the following: a label for a group of writers contributing to, or editing, or distributing a magazine or series of books; the name of the room where the magazine or series was edited; the name of a bookstore (e.g. *Xinyue she*) or publishing house (e.g. *Chuangzao she*); the name of a network of intellectuals interested in literature. Sometimes, it meant all of that at the same time. To the outside observer, it is not clear whether the founding of a *she* or *hui* was always necessary to achieve the goals set by the individuals involved. The founding of literary societies sometimes comes across as the instinctive, habitual obeying to an unspoken rule, which stated that in some cases collective action was more effective or more appropriate than individual action, and a collective 'name' had to be given to a joint effort by more than one individual.

Modern Chinese literary practice in the 1920s, but also in later decades, is characterised by collectivity. The behaviour of writers, editors and publishers, and, presumably, also that of readers, is partly conditioned by the body of which they are members, and the names given to those bodies. Bourdieu's own application of his theory to the French literary field does not yield this result, and therefore the phenomenon of collectivity is somewhat neglected in his *The Rules of Art*. This does not discredit the theory, for without the theory the above observations would never have been made.

Notes

- 1 Bourdieu considers the 'double disavowal', i.e. statements of the kind 'I loathe X but I also loathe the opposite of X' to be the 'deep structure' of change within the literary field. New positions can only be created by a simultaneous denial of all existing ones (Bourdieu 1988:552).
- 2 The notion of *wenren*, and the concomitant notion of *wentan* ('literary scene') is defined in Lee 1973: 30–40. It should be pointed out that Lee's *wentan* is not the same as my 'field', but refers to the most vocal and visible parts of the field, especially of the literary establishment.
- 3 Research on the income of writers, whether in the 1920s or 1930s, has hardly been done so far and is, indeed, difficult to do. My remark about the income of writers in the 1930s is based on conversations with Mr Wang Dehou, Lu Xun expert and former vice-director of the Lu Xun Museum in Beijing, who told me that a popular saying in Beijing in the 1930s went: '*Yiben shiji, yige siheyuan*' ('One collection of poems, one mansion'), and mentioned the poet Ai Qing as an example of someone who had bought a *siheyuan* in Beijing from the royalties of his first collection of poetry. As for the 1920s, some remarks by Yu Dafu, which first appeared in print in 1931, but were probably made in 1927, may be applicable. When asked about his monthly income, Yu answered that, if he wrote every day, he could earn about 200 yuan each month. As examples of the very few writers whom he considered to be able to live off their writing, he mentioned Zhang Ziping, whose annual income in royalties he estimated at 5,000 yuan, and Lu Xun, who supposedly earned more than 10,000 yuan a year in royalties. (Rao Hongjing 1985: 978–9). The latter figure might be somewhat exaggerated, although Lu Xun did sue the Beixin bookstore in 1929 for immediate payment of 8,000 yuan in royalties that they owed him. See Wang Xiaoming 1993: 256.
- 4 A term taken from Saari 1990. Saari claims that the fact that students during the period mentioned in the title of his book were, for the first time in Chinese history, forced to leave home at a relatively young age and live together with others of the same age at institutes of education, was to a large extent responsible for the rapid spread of 'new thought' and the development of student activism. Similar claims are being made by Paula Harrell (1992), who focuses on the 'peer group effect' among students in Japan. When related to Bourdieu's theory, the term 'peer group effect' is useful in describing an important part of the habitus of May Fourth intellectuals.
- 5 Facts taken from: Zhou Liangpei 1993b, Vol. 2: 161–74; Wang Jingzhi 1996; personal correspondence with Wang Jingzhi. See also Hockx 1996.
- 6 Information based on personal communication with Mr Wang Dehou, former vice-director of the Lu Xun Museum. Although I did not visit the Badaowan site, I noticed that Lu Xun's former home in the North-West of Beijing, which is now part of the Lu Xun Museum, is also of a considerable size, even though it is the smallest home he ever lived in during his time in Beijing.
- 7 For a more elaborate discussion of the publication of writers' correspondence in this period, see Chapter Four.

- 8 Women writers seem to be the exception here, and Ding Ling is the exception to the exception. Although there were a few dozen women writers active in the literary field of the 1920s, I do not know of any women editors apart from Ding Ling.
- 9 The above is based on scattered references in Guo Moruo's *Chuangzao shinian* (*Ten Years of Creation*; Guo 1933). It should be kept in mind, however, that Guo is likely to be exaggerating somewhat, since *Ten Years of Creation* was written in reply to Lu Xun's lecture 'Shanghai wenyi zhi yipie' ('A Look at the Literary Arts in Shanghai') (Lu Xun 1981, Vol. 4: 228–41), in which Lu Xun called the members of the Creation Society, including Guo Moruo, 'talented hooligans' ('caizi + liumang', a pun on the genre of pulp fiction called *caizi jiaren xiaoshuo* (talent and beauty stories), insinuating that their main talent was the ability to make money out of their 'romantic' image. Therefore, Guo Moruo's account of the period lays very strong emphasis on the hardship and poverty he suffered and the various possibilities to cash in on his talents which he forsook for the sake of art.
- 10 Xu Zhimo obviously being the exception.
- 11 Cf. Cheng 1923. For the Creationists' estimation of *Study Lamp* as 'belonging' to the Literary Association network and the connection of that fact to the decision to edit *Creation Daily*, see Guo 1933: 250.
- 12 Statistics and information taken from *Shangwu yinshuguan tushu mulu* (1897–1949) (*Catalogue of Publications of the Commercial Press* (1897–1949)) (1981).
- 13 A typical example of the vast differences in taste that might occur between those educated in China and those educated abroad is the following. For some time during the 1920s, Zheng Zhenduo had a dream of setting up a 'Writers' Home' on the borders of the West Lake in Hangzhou, China's foremost scenic spot which occurs in the works of countless poets of many dynasties, including many writers of new literature, especially the ones, like Wang Jingzhi, Zhu Ziqing, and Zheng Zhenduo, who were educated in China. Guo Moruo and Cheng Fangwu, however, upon their return to China after years of stay in Japan, were surprised to find out that they found the West Lake utterly boring and unattractive. (Cf. Guo Moruo 1933: 116–19.)
- 14 I am grateful to Raoul Findeisen for providing me with Jing Yingyu's year of death.
- 15 For example Tang Xingtian's and Guo Moruo's translations of Theodor Storm's *Immensee*.
- 16 This general discontent is vented in great detail in two articles by Tingsheng [Zhou Quanping]: 'Qihei yituan de chubanjie' ('The Pitch-Black Publishing World') and 'Zenmeyang qu qingli chubanjie' ('How to Clean Up the Publishing World'), both originally published in *Hongshui* in 1925, and reprinted as Rao 1985: 396–402.
- 17 Appendix to *Hongshui*, 3: 35 (November 1927).
- 18 Back cover of *Hongshui*, 2: 22 (August 1926). Similar lists appeared on back covers of other issues of *Hongshui*.
- 19 'Yidian xiaoxiao de shenming' ('A Small Announcement'), *Hongshui* 1 (1925–26): 89–90.
- 20 The advertisements are reprinted in Rao 1985: 1081–2.

From Literature to Love

Glory and decline of the love-letter genre

Raoul David Findeisen

Introduction

Despite the fact that it has successfully drawn away attention from the generally male heroes in the pantheon of modern Chinese literature, the study of women writers still tends to be executed as a victimology¹, although it has been convincingly argued that part of the female experience actually *is* being a victim and has as such found a multi-faceted and deep-structured literary expression (see for instance Kubin 1993). On the other hand, the position of women, and accordingly of women writers, in modern literature is essentially linked to more general social concepts. One of the pioneering studies in the field of Chinese literature, inspired by the antecedents of feminist criticism, quite naturally opened perspectives onto the literary field and also inquired into social parameters of women's writing conditions (Feuerwerker 1975). In the meantime, the scope of study of *nüxing wenxue* is starting to find convergences with the *nüxing yanjiu*, recently established in China herself (see Nivard 1994). However, as far as I can see, there has not been any thorough attempt to bring the female and male perspectives together, in the sense that couples in which both partners are engaged in writing are made objects of investigation, with the exception of some inspiring reflections which were not pushed further precisely because they were outside the scope of study.²

In Western criticism studying Western literatures, the situation is not very different. Countless are the studies that deplore Silvia Plath's status as a victim (see Malcolm 1994), thus studying creativity from

the perspective of losses, which are generally unbalanced and frequently found on the woman's side. Only recently, the creative interaction of couples, rather than the parasitic model at women's expense, has moved towards the centre of attention, though approaches are, sociologically speaking, still underdeveloped (see Chadwick and de Courtivron 1993).

It is no mere coincidence that the pioneer of the *baihua* movement in literature, Hu Shi, has also contributed a number of pronounced reflections on how relationships between the sexes could be organised in the society that was meant to come into being. As commonly known, he was among those existentially affected by traditional marriage conventions (cf. Grieder 1970: 351–4), yet opted for a quietist attitude about it. Of the ten core topics he listed in 1919 as essential concerns of the New Culture Movement, three were immediately related to those conventions, namely '(4) the problem of women's liberation, (5) the problem of chastity, [. . .] (8) the problem of marriage' (Hu Shi 1919: 253). In Hu Shi's own life, these 'problems' resulted in a number of extramarital affairs that have left their marks in literary works of the time, as well as inspired various recent works of biographical literature (e.g. Fei Yan and Dong Jingsen 1992). It is no less incidental that another protagonist of modern literature, Lu Xun, made his debut as a *baihua* writer both with his famous *Diary of a Madman* and with a *zawen* essay on marriage, published almost simultaneously. The essay, by the way, includes a poem sent to Lu Xun by a young man whom the author provided with a voice to describing his suffering from traditional morals concerning matrimony, be it fictitious or not (1981, Vol. 1: 321–3).

A gradually loosening moral rigorism concerning relationships between the sexes has helped pave the ground for making re-available a huge amount of sources, or even creating them, since there is still a number of survivors from the early generations of May Fourth literature. Although such newly created sources mostly belong to the genre of *zhuanji wenxue* (or *biographie romancée*) with all its intricate methodological implications, they draw on unpublished material or on material scarcely available.

A number of recently started or already completed series display this interest. First, one should mention the *Liangdi congshu*³, whose title refers to the correspondence between Lu Xun and Xu Guangping, published as *Liangdi shu* (*Letters Between Two Places*) in 1933. This series compiles letter collections and correspondence, no matter where and how they were previously published, and in some

cases, depending on the available space, adds relevant texts by the respective partners, not giving any further explanation on the purpose of the series, except the one implied in the programmatic title to publish texts from both sides.

Another series is *Mingren qingjie* (Sentimental Bonds of Celebrities), with a total of 18 titles, all published in January 1995 by Zhongguo qingnian chubanshe in Beijing. The range is broader and includes a number of couples in which just one partner has had any remarkable literary activity. As a rule, the volumes are divided into two parts. The first part gives a critical account of the relationship, with source indications. The second part includes literary documents, in some cases with careful annotations either published for the first time or elaborated by the author-editors. Chronologically the next series (apparently a product of competition) is *Zhongguo xiandai zuojia qing yu ai* (Passions and Loves of Modern Chinese Writers), published by Sichuan wenyi chubanshe, which started publication one month later. It has, as the title indicates, a slightly different emphasis by concentrating on individual figures and their changing partnerships. Unlike the other series, the volumes are preceded by a general introduction, written by the well-known Lu Xun scholar Chen Shuyu. Though emphasising the *zhuanji wenxue* character of the undertaking, this introduction rightly points out the prominent role that conflicts between traditional and non-traditional views of the relationships between the sexes played in May Fourth fiction, drawing on psychological arguments that had been prepared by a number of studies on individual authors.⁴ As in the previous series, the volumes present themselves in two parts, yet the biographical first part is clearly attributable to the *zhuanji* genre and is rich in fictitious dialogues mingled with other texts from those involved.

Finally, a third series, creating new sources rather than making old ones available, should be mentioned. Started in 1992, it is called *Mingren zhi lu huiyi congshu* (Memoirs by the Spouses of Celebrities), with each separate volume carrying the title *Me And . . .*, where the dots stand for the name of the celebrity. The broad range of literary ambitions of the exclusively female authors has all kinds of results: from the compilation of previously published reminiscences, as in the case of Wang Yingxia (*Me and Yu Dafu*) to the oral report revised by a third person, as in the case of Wu Sihong (on Jiang Guangci). In a number of cases the forum is clearly used to establish the legitimacy of a relationship, particularly in cases where other similarly significant ones had preceded, as with Wang Defen (on Xiao Jun).⁵ Most of the

'celebrities' are deceased, therefore the accounts are not just retrospective, in most cases going back decades, but also involve elements of a commemorative service in which the rule *nihil nisi bene* prevails, even more so since the memorial service is in itself a way to mark legitimate widowhood. Letters addressed to already deceased partners represent a specific sub-type of this genre and shall briefly be discussed below.

It goes without saying that the selections made in all the above-mentioned series strongly depend on the already established canon, increasingly so where the focus is not on the couple's shared or common literary actions. Thus the series can by no means provide a satisfactory survey of the conditions of literary production, or be sociologically representative. In this chapter, I intend to present a more comprehensive treatment of literary couples in Republican China and of the concomitant literary genre: the *qingshu* or love-letter. First, however, some definitions are required.

What is a literary couple?

Not surprisingly and as predicted by Bourdieu, any approach to the literary field uncovers, through its essential quantifying aspects, otherwise neglected literary figures. As Bourdieu further points out, these approaches have a heterodox potential, particularly *vis-à-vis* the canon as embodied in literary histories, since 'le sociologue doit aussi rompre avec l'idéalisme de l'hagiographie littéraire' (the sociologist also has to break with the idealism of literary hagiography) (Bourdieu 1992: 13). In this case, however, due to the social stigmatization of illicit partnerships, primary sources on these neglected figures are scarcely available, as is biographical information.

Though the term 'literary couple' is not wholly satisfying, I shall use it hereafter for its brevity and convenience, defining it as two individuals of either the opposite or the same sex who have (1) supposedly had an intimate partnership, and (2) both published at least one independent volume of creative writing, i.e. a piece of literature classified as *xiaoshuo*, *sanwen*, *zawen*, *zagan*, *suibi*, *shi* or *ci*, be it before or after they met.

Setting aside those who had already achieved literary fame at the time when their love was at its apogee (I have in mind Lu Xiaoman and Xu Zhimo, Xu Guangping and Lu Xun, i.e. those who 'went public' with their relationship), biographical sources available are not very talkative in this respect. The by far most fruitful source still

proved to be Li Liming's *Sketch Biographies of Modern Chinese Writers*, not least because of its separate listing of source materials (Li Liming 1977, 1978). The most comprehensive reference work on modern literature, the *List of Pen-Names of Modern Chinese Authors* (Xu and Qin 1988), listing 6,000 authors with 30,000 pen-names, just gives, beyond its core scope, dates of birth (and death), places of origin and, if differing, place of birth. Taking the biographical data on women writers compiled by Li Liming as a point of departure and adding the indications to be found in Yan Chunde 1983, I managed to find some 80 literary couples constituted between 1919 and 1949.

The sheer number of such 'literary couples', the frequently occurring almost complete absence of any biographical data, and their very heterogenous shared literary production has brought me to limit the scope of my study to the genre of love-letters. However, shared literary undertakings range from joint collections of poetry, as in the case of *Li Bai lou zixuan shi* (*Selected Poems from [Lin Bei-]li's and [Lin Geng-]bai's Mansion*; 1946) by Lin Beili (1916-) and Lin Gengbai (1898-1941), to jointly published stories, as in *Bashe* (1933), privately printed in Harbin by Xiao Hong and Xiao Jun. A very common joint literary activity is translation, sometimes with one party polishing translations of the other, as in the case of Xu Guangping, whose translation of *Was Peterchens Freunde erzählen* (1921, translated in 1928) by Herminia Zur Mühlen (1883-1951) underwent editorial polishing by Lu Xun (see Lu Xun 1981, Vol. 11: 281-2). There are also examples of co-authored creative works, towards the end of the 1930s most markedly in the field of drama, in many cases imbedded in collective production procedures, less due to the individual expertise of those involved (such as director, stage designers, actors, etc.) than to shared political convictions which sometimes also implied shared housing and living. A series of novels written in teamwork by Yuan Jing (1914-) and Kong Jue (1914-66) between 1947 and 1951 are a fine example.⁶

Due to a poor source situation with persisting taboos, doubtlessly also effective homosexual partnerships are underrepresented. I have found just one single literary document related to a homosexual love between women, a short piece of narrative prose by the otherwise unknown Guo Jialing, published in 1928 (see Zhang Ruogu 1928).⁷ Interestingly enough, the narrative forms the framework for two letters exchanged by two women. In the story, the female protagonist ('Soft Lotus') is handed a farewell letter by her servant. She continues to read aloud a previous letter she received from her female friend:

'All over the campus, I cannot find any woman who loves me like you do!' Whether the two poets from the Lakeside Society, Ying Xiuren (1900–33) and Pan Mohua (1902–34), the former working as a banker in Shanghai, who met on the bank of the Hangzhou West Lake for poetic purposes, had such a relationship is, for the time being, pure speculation.⁸

Among all available sources, however, the most prominent position is taken by the love-letters (*qingshu*). Mainly between 1924 and 1937, they developed a number of features that draw them close to a literary genre with its own history, especially when published under the respective genre designation. I shall therefore concentrate on various manifestations of the *qingshu* genre, or more generally speaking on genres that imply any mode of dialogue claiming to be non-fictional and entering into a literary form. This includes, to a certain extent, also fore- and afterwords written for each other and it may also include diaries addressed to each other, yet these two forms will not be discussed here.

What is a *qingshu*?

The compound *qingshu*, rendered here as 'love-letter', makes its first appearance in a play by Guan Hanqing (c. 1240–1320) where it simply meant a 'report on the actual situation', yet as early as in Feng Menglong's collection *Xingshi hengyan* of 1627 it took the meaning of 'a written document expressing love between the sexes'.⁹ However, the usage as 'letter related to emotions' in the lyrical or sentimental sense (*shuqing*) is also present around May Fourth. From the mid-1920s onwards, the expression gradually adopted the function of a generic term, as testified by several dozens of collections published between 1911 and 1949 of which a number will be discussed hereafter (Tian Dawei 1992: n^{os} 15769–15843, 15933–16001).

As early as in 1915, seemingly in response to a growing need of writing such items, a volume in clumsy *wenyan* was published. Its introduction notices a marked influence of 'European and American ideas on the relationships between the sexes' (Wu Ansun 1915: 2–3). The work, however, is a rather baroque compilation with meticulous descriptions of various stages and situations of courtship in which letters may play a crucial role, with conventional attention to family members of both parties, and giving a whole set of norms as to how these letters should be written. The traditional term *chidu* is used for 'letter'.

As in many other cases, it is elucidating to consult Zhou Zuoren, who, in the 1933 preface to a collection of his own letters, tried to give a definition of the two commonly used terms, *xin* and *shu* (using himself the genre designation *xin*, as the preface was a 'Prefatory Letter' (*xu xin*) to the publisher of his collection). Taking the division of his own volume as a point of departure, he gives a sketchy historical overview and concludes that '*shu* is basically a genre of traditional literature which can enter into the official collected works', whereas '*chidu* corresponds to what we call *xin*. They are private letters (*sishu*), originally not intended for publication. The text can be just a few sentences long, communicate feelings or describe facts, yet to get glimpses into its disposition from one or two words picked out is typical for it.' (Zhou 1992, Vol. 2: 37-8)

To clarify to a satisfactory extent how the genre of *qingshu* was perceived and how it was supposed to work (and when it was seen as not working), a look at Ding Ling's 'Bu suan qingshu' ('Not a Love-Letter'), published in *Wenxue* in 1933, might be helpful for hints *ex contrario* (Ding Ling 1933). The text consists of a series of diary-like 'non-*qingshu*' letters dated 11 and 13 August, with a postscript including the declaration of not being *qingshu*, dated 5 January. The whole text was probably written in 1931/32 (cf. Yuan Liangjun 1982: 618). There is biographical evidence that the text was originally meant to be addressed to Feng Xuefeng (1903-76) who had first met Ding Ling in Peking in 1927, then lived with her and her husband Hu Yepin for some time in early 1928 at the West Lake in Hangzhou, forming a frequently upset *ménage à trois* of writers, with Shen Congwen as an additional part-time player and observer, before Ding, Hu and Feng settled in Shanghai. After Hu Yepin's death on 2 February 1931, Ding and Feng were again in close touch.¹⁰ It is in this piece that Ding Ling has expressed the ideal of shared creative literary activity most poignantly, when she described it as 'writing at the same desk and reading on the same bench' (Ding Ling 1933: 369).

The most prolific and also most important figure for this genre is Zhang Yiping (1902-46). After having acted as Hu Shi's private secretary for some time in the early 1920s, he published poems and small prose in various journals of the circle that was to become the 'Thread of Talk' Society with its magazine of the same name (*Yusi*). At the time, he was in close touch with Lu Xun and published the volume *Qingshu yi shu* (*A Bundle of Love-letters*; 1926) which became an instant success.¹¹ Several later *qingshu* writers and compilers

explicitly or implicitly refer to this volume, which marks the full development of *qingshu* as a genre of fiction. His other writings are, partly due to his ill health, mainly *xiaopinwen* (little prose pieces) which give a wide range of typological variations related to the letter genre. It covers purely fictitious letters, short notes sometimes implicitly addressed to his wife, the painter and writer Wu Shutian (1903–42) and also full-fledged letters that are dated and allow attribution to an actual biographical context. More important, however, is the outcome of this epistolary experience, the *Lectures on Letters* published in 1932. Though in essence a compilation of letters to and from the author, complemented by a number of published letters from magazines such as *Xin qingnian* (*New Youth*) and *Yusi*, it attempts both to provide a systematic overview and to isolate of norms for the genre. Zhang deems it as typical for the new literature 'that it has liberated emotions and initiated progress in letter-writing'. He starts by asking the question why in traditional literature 'really moving letters' are so scarce. 'We may go back and forth thousands of years and still hardly find any moving love-letters' (Zhang Yiping 1932: 2). In an ironical hyperbole he identifies the shift in terms of address when sons are writing to their fathers as the most fundamental change that has taken place in the genre.

The 'lectures' by Zhang Yiping deal with the meaning, the writing and the classification of letters. He mentions 'plenty of reference works' consulted, 'mostly of poor quality', and among those works points out *The Vernacular Letter*¹² by Gao Yuhan as a positive example. Zhang discerns four letter types: 'lyrical' (*shuqing*), 'argumentative' (*shuoli*), 'descriptive-narrative' (*jishi*) and 'short letters' (*chidu xiaojian*).¹³ As for the lyrical letters, they should be 'true and moving': 'Lyrical letters describe emotions. When written by men and women to each other, we conveniently call them *qingshu*.' Zhang does not suffer from modesty when giving one love-letter from his own hand as an example, and does not hesitate to quote a comment on it by Sun Fuyuan, the former editor of *Yusi*: 'I have not read a letter like yours in ten years' (Zhang Yiping 1932: 57) – nothing less than the ten years that 'new literature' had experienced.

Zhang also gives the example of a *qingshu* 'for which there are testimonies that it was written within five minutes', considering a friend's case who was a businessman, and hence had not the time to respond to his sweetheart's letters in similar length. As a general rule, Zhang Yiping states that a *qingshu* should be 'joyful, but not excessive, sorrowful, but not distressed' (21–2).

Below, I shall introduce some examples of *qingshu* writings by literary couples, taking the genre concept in the broadest sense, i.e. also considering texts that were not published under the genre label. Literary careers of both parties will be briefly discussed. Since it makes a difference whether a couple published its correspondence soon after it was written, or one party published it after the death of the other, or the letters were edited posthumously by a third person, special attention will be given to the editorial situation and history.

The discussion of *qingshu* collections by 'literary couples' will be chronological, according to the time when the parties actually became a couple. The presentation of the material will be followed by a discussion of some shared patterns of the collections. Letter writing usually has the ontological condition of being physically separated or even in distant places.¹⁴ This means, since separate places of domicile usually precede a more institutionalised partnership, usually a marriage, that the less everyday experience has been accumulated by a couple, the more *qingshu* are produced.

Some *qingshu* collections authored by literary couples

Cao Peisheng and Hu Shi

Although Cao Peisheng (1902–73) strictly speaking should be excluded from the 'literary couples', for several reasons she merits some attention. First, she had been emotionally committed to various authors from the very core of new literature, among them first of all Hu Shi (1891–1962), but also the poet Wang Jingzhi (1902–96) whose poems from *Hui de feng* (*Orchid Wind*; 1922) are in part addressed to her (see Hockx 1996). Hu Shi had written a preface to this collection, but was not aware of Cao's relation to Wang when she asked him to write some introductory words for the Anhui Association's journal in Hangzhou. Being a distant cousin, she had already been present at Hu Shi's marriage which actually was the result of the above quoted formula of '[...] Eastern in family matters'. The renewed contact resulted in a whole summer spent together in Hangzhou in 1924. They planned to marry, but Hu Shi's legal wife Jiang Dongxiu's threats soon stopped his divorce proposals, reportedly with the help of a kitchen-knife (Guo Yuan 1995: 242).¹⁵ Second, she is the addressee of dozens of occasional poems by Hu Shi. Third, among the many texts by Hu Shi explicitly or implicitly

addressed to Cao Peisheng, some translations from Elizabeth Barrett's poetry take a prominent position. There is no doubt that this referred to the poetess's relationship to the poet Robert Browning, thus to the image of an ideal of romantic love of which the biographical elements were well known in China at that time. In March and May 1925, respectively, he translated 'Parting on a Bright Early Morning' and 'You Always Have the Day You Loved Me', which offer a consolation that sounds somewhat ambivalent.¹⁶ Fourth, since most of her texts have been destroyed, in particular the correspondence with Hu Shi, the love between them has inspired even more *zhuanji* literature.¹⁷

Cao Peisheng went to Nanjing to study agriculture after graduating from Hangzhou Women's College. When it became evident that Hu Shi would cede to kitchen-knives, i.e. opt for the more quietist way of handling his marriage affairs, Cao Peisheng attempted suicide in 1928. In one of her few letters preserved, she mentioned the plan of 'going into the deep mountains at forty'. She stated that her life then was opposed to her previous one.¹⁸ She also recorded a *dayoushi* composed a few months earlier:

Love of humans dissolves like smoke
 Relatives and friends are hardly reliable
 [. . .]
 Lonely do I appreciate collections of New Poetry.
 (in Wu Shutian 1933: 47)

Yang Meilei and Zhu Qianzhi

When Yang Meilei (1897–1929) met Zhu Qianzhi (1899–1972) in 1923 in Beijing, where she was studying music, she had already gained some fame with her poetry. Before, when teaching in Guangzhou, her vigorous propaganda for celibacy (see Chen Yutang 1993: 270b) had attracted special attention. They both taught at the new university in Xiamen in 1923 and then moved to Hangzhou. They had their correspondence published as *Hexin (Lotus Heart)* in 1924, the volume also carrying the text of an opera of the same title, written by Yang Meilei. Moreover, it is interesting to note that the inside cover page carries the subtitle 'A Bundle of Love-letters', identical to Zhang Yiping's bestseller published two years later. Thus, Yang and Zhu can be regarded as inventors of a fairly dispersed 'brand name' for *qingshu*. Unlike others among their contemporaries,

Yang and Zhu seem to have enjoyed their parents' support, since the volume carries letters from their mothers. The volume marked the couple's departure from literature: Yang devoted herself to music, whereas Zhu concentrated on his research on traditional literature and edited Yang's works posthumously as *Meilei wencun* (*Meilei's Collected Writings*).

Wu Shutian and Zhang Yiping

With regard to the genre of *qingshu* in general, Wu Shutian (1903–42) and Zhang Yiping (1902–46) occupy a particularly significant position. None among the other couples and love-letter authors discussed here have been involved in the brief history of the genre in such varied ways as they: as producers, of course, but also as compilers of love-letters by third parties. They also published reflections on the letter genre, using other genres as its means, commented on each other's compilations, used the genre designation to designate works actually belonging to another genre, and they fictionalised it. What is most interesting sociologically, in the sense of finding out what happens on the road between 'literature' and 'love', is that they practised the widest range of literary co-operation among all couples I know of in Republican literature. They have, hence, contributed more than anyone else to the flourishing of *qingshu*.

Although, unlike other couples, they never published all their correspondence jointly in a single collection, this couple's output offers some revealing instances of love-letter writing. Their letters are scattered in many different kinds of publications, with often misleading titles that are certainly due to strategic decisions within the literary field, taken by the respective author and not by the publisher. Except for the fictitious *A Bundle of Love-letters* (see above), there are the *Letters from the Moon-Watch Mansion* (Wu Shutian and Zhang Yiping 1931), signed with both names and nevertheless a quite heterogenous compilation. Wu Shutian was also active in compiling letters by third persons, namely her *Nüzi shuxin* (*Women's Letters*; 1933), which preserved one of Cao Peisheng's very few extant letters.

Song Ruoyu and Jiang Guangci

Together with the translator Cao Jinghua, Song Ruoyu (1900–26) was among leading student activists in Kaifeng around May Fourth. She edited the journal *Nüquan* (*Women's Power*) and joined the staff of

the local *Qingnian* (*Youth*) journal (cf. Wu Tenghuang 1982: 48–50 and 57–62). Immortalised as one of the martyrs of modern leftist literature, Jiang Guangci (1901–31) does not need any special introduction. He had exchanged letters with Song Ruoyu since the summer of 1920 when he stayed in Moscow.¹⁹ When he published the letters it was also a commemorative act for his partner, who had died one year before he wrote his introduction, whence the title *Jinianbei* (*Memorial Stone*). It is therefore, strictly speaking, not a joint effort, but Jiang simply acted as editor. The correspondence, being 57 letters by Song Ruoyu, written from 22 January 1925 to 15 September 1926, and 40 by Jiang Guangci, from 3 November 1924 to 4 September 1926, are arranged by author, thus stressing independence rather than dialogue.

Love-letters, though unpublished, would again play a role in Jiang Guangci's life after the death of Song Ruoyu. Emotional waves went high when he married again. Luo Shan, a student of Fudan University where Jiang had also taught for some time, wrote to him, appealing to the memory of his second wife: 'My beloved elder brother, I have heard you married Wu Sihong. She is Tian Han's seventh mistress, and besides she is a bad woman with her body covered with the scars of venereal diseases. How can you marry such a woman? My heart is broken.' (cited in Wu Sihong 1992: 35)

Lu Yin and Li Weijian

When the writer Lu Yin (1899–1934), widow of Guo Mengliang (?1897–1925), whom she had conquered despite the fact that he was married (*cause célèbre* at the time in Beijing), met the young student Li Weijian (1907–81) in 1928 at the home of the philosopher Qu Shiying (1900–76), the meeting had been arranged by their host. At seeing a volume of hers on Qu's shelves, Li Weijian had shown interest in meeting the already well-established writer, who had published several volumes of stories and become the noted counterpart of Bing Xin. At the time, Li Weijian was dabbling in poetry. This resulted in his first volume *Qidao* (*Prayer*, 1933), part of which consisted of poems he had sent to Lu Yin. Li's first publication had been a translation of *Ariel* by André Maurois (1885–1967), a biographical novel on the life of Shelley (Li Weijian 1931). Both writers lived in Peking at that time. After Lu Yin's death, he continued to write mainly essayist prose, but also a volume in which he again published love-letters, this time unilateral (Li Weijian 1948).

Love-letters exchanged between Li Weijian and Lu Yin were first serialised in 1930 and later published in book-form (Lu Yin and Li Weijian 1995). This collection will be discussed in more detail below.

Bai Wei and Yang Sao

In 1915, upon graduation at a Teachers' College, Bai Wei (also known as Huang Baiwei; 1894–1987) left her home in Hunan Province to escape a proposed marriage and studied various subjects from literature to psychology, philosophy and aesthetics at Tokyo Women's Normal University. It was during her stay in Japan that she met the poet Yang Sao (1900–57). Both of them published creative writing in Lu Xun's journal *Benliu* (*Torrent Flood*) in 1928, when they taught at China College in Wusong, Shanghai. She was among the few female members of the Creation Society and later of the League of Left Wing Writers. They published their correspondence as *Zuo ye* (*Last Night*) in 1933, the same year as Yang's poetry collection *Chun de lianshang* (*Love Scars in Spring*). He later belonged to the Hangzhou-based circle around *Xiandai* (*Les Contemporains*) magazine and their letters were probably exchanged between Hangzhou and Shanghai.

The volume has banished the generic term *qingshu* into its subtitle. Letters are arranged in two sections according to their authorship, being 93 from her and 86 from his side. She wrote an introductory poem, whereas he is giving a detailed account on the background and principles of the compilation. The letters show a somewhat reserved woman in exchange with a pathetic young poet (she was 30 when the correspondence began, he was 24). She quite rationally responds to his topoi of the unsayable by writing: 'Are you afraid of speaking out? But your letter is written with words.' (Bai and Yang 1994: 10) She stresses that her feelings for the poet are not 'the ordinary ones between men and women. Do you understand?' Both writers' texts are strongly impregnated by Buddhist terminology (religion had been among her study subjects in Japan). The ideal of purity is hence very present in all its forms. She writes that the 'intimate kiss of passion' was still lying in a far distant country and makes a clear difference between *qing* and *ai*: 'No, I don't love, maybe in one or two years, for love makes one day as if it were three days.' (ibid.: 13) Their letters abound with reflections on acquisition and loss which are both inspired by Buddhist epistemology and put into apodeictic imagery. At the time, she had already a considerable career of about a decade, writing plays, poetry, and prose fiction,

which placed him in the position of the pupil asking for favours and turning it into lovers' play: 'If you don't first show me your plays, I have decided not to let you read anything I have written.' (cited in Tan Zhengbi: 164)

Luo Hong and Zhu Wen

When Luo Hong (1910–) left a teaching post in her home in Wusong and became a private tutor in a Suzhou household, she intended to devote herself to creative writing. In 1930, at Dongwu University in Suzhou, she met the poet and translator Zhu Wen (1911–), who was loosely associated with a group of writers around Zheng Boqi and Su Xuelin (Yan Chunde 1983: 329). Both were at the beginning of ambitious literary careers and had good motivations to publish the letters they were soon to exchange. In 1931, they published 22 letters in a first portion with the programmatic title *Cong wenxue dao lian'ai* (*From Literature to Love*). The response to this first collection seems to have been favourable, since the very same year another 109 letters followed, as *Lianren shujian* (*Letters of Lovers*), followed by another sequel, of 50 letters, possibly a selection from previous ones, now titled *Chulian qingshu ji* (*Letters of a First Love*), which came out in 1932 and went into three reprints, the last one in 1939 under the slightly modified title *Chulian de qingshu* (cf. Tian Dawei 1992, Vol. 2: 1251, n^{os} 15809–813). Zhu Wen's earliest collection had been *Xiandai Zuojia* (*A Modern Writer*; 1929) in which the title story indicates an acute sense for the contemporary conditions of writing and its literary transformation.

Ding Ling and Hu Yepin

Though Ding Ling is doubtless among the most important partners in literary couples to have gained extensive practical experience in, as well as produced essayistic and fictionalised reflections on, the conditions of joint and simultaneous creative production, this did not become manifest in a *qingshu* collection with any of her partners. This is certainly also due to her sense of independence that resulted in a radical reluctance to accept any *shisheng* (teacher–student) pattern, which is a pattern that can duly be considered as an essential device of the genre of the love-letter, be it within a stable scheme defined at an early stage, or as a shifting one that nevertheless repeatedly becomes a point of reference for both parties.²⁰

I have become a rather reasonable being, capable of self-control, yet I still have desires for you and I still have dreams. In my dreams, I imagine how our lives could be bound together. I imagine how we write at one desk and how we read on one bench. Doing things together, we could discuss as we like, and we were somehow less constrained than others, and somehow truer. (Ding Ling 1933: 369)

When Ding Ling and Hu Yepin married in 1925, two people came together who had both the clear idea that they wanted to engage in literary careers, even if they did not quite know how to handle it. In his 'Notes on Ding Ling', Shen Congwen, who for many of the endeavours of the couple Ding-Hu was a close and not always uncommitted observer, reported a doubtlessly partly fictionalised dialogue between the two that nevertheless casts more light on the relationship:

The male says: 'I know you don't love me and already love somebody else.'

The female then says: 'As you don't love me, you don't trust me.'

The male responds: 'It is precisely because I trust you that you are going to meet him.'

The female responds: 'You are so self-conscious and still you say you love me!'

The male responds: 'I trust you, and then you go to his place all day long . . .'

The female responds: 'Don't you know exactly that it's for some business that I am going there?'

Their words become even a bit weightier, until the female takes off her coat and takes out the money from her pockets and says, weeping and at the same time with her heart broken:

'[Hu Ye-]Pin, Pin, don't talk any more, look, I do not need any money. As for me, I am now leaving, with my two hands empty. You must not look for me!'

As if on good grounds, the male then turns furious and says: 'Well, my dear [i.e. 'my beauty'], you are going your way. I know that when you leave you are going to [lie at] someone else's side.'²¹

Modes and patterns of *qingshu* writing

Zhou Zuoren already clearly pointed out the basic difficulty in letter-compilation when he wrote that 'assembling them is not easy. The

letters I send out year by year are fairly numerous. But how can I get them back? Who will keep those old letters and wait for somebody asking for them?' (Zhou Zuoren 1992, Vol. 3: 38). As mentioned above, he also pondered about which type of letters was fit to be collected and concluded that *shu* could go into regular collections (*zhengji*), whereas *xin* were for apocrypha (*bieji*).

It is obvious that assembling the necessary text material is considerably facilitated if exchange of *qingshu* precedes and accompanies a relationship actualised in a marriage or otherwise institutionalised. It is also obvious that both 'literary couples' and 'non-literary couples', by the very act of producing and publishing such letters, want to produce symbolic values, to speak in Bourdieu's terms. In the case of *qingshu*, these values have two important aspects: one is related to the literary field and could eventually become converted into capital. This goes for cases in which a *qingshu* collection formed the beginning of a literary career, or for others in which it confirmed already existing literary careers, either from one side or from both. Collections which were a singular event, neither preceded nor followed by any other identifiable literary activity, i.e. those written by 'non-literary couples', present an intermediate form of the second aspect effective in *qingshu* production. The exchange of love-letters is also aimed at creating the symbolic capital of credibility of one's own feelings. That is why I shall first discuss patterns of editorial work in these collections and inquire into their motivation, usually elaborated in introductory remarks. For the second aspect, I shall go into some details of how these love-letters are attempting to authenticate emotions.

As for participation in the literary field with *qingshu*, the time elapsed between the writing of love-letters and their publication is an important indicator and also sheds light on the stage of development the genre was in. Lu Yin and Li Weijian serialised their correspondence, being 39 letters by Li Weijian to Lu Yin and 29 vice versa, under the title 'Correspondence of Yun and Ou' (abbreviated from his name Yiyun 'drifting cloud' and hers Leng'ou 'cold seagull') in February 1930 in the Tianjin newspaper *Yishi bao*. In 1931, they published the same letters in book-form with the title slightly changed into *Yun Ou qingshu ji* (*Love-letters of Yun and Ou*), which can be taken as an indication of the apogee of the genre in that very year. The letters were published in the order in which they were written, hence the dialogue form was preserved. They cover a period of one year, from March 1928 to late 1929, but are undated (cf. Lu Jun

1995: 387) and close with a long poem in four parts by Li Weijian, anticipating both his moving downtown and meeting his sweetheart daily, as well as the publication as a book, by 'turning over the last page'. On this occasion, he gives a literal *baihua* reading of the generic term *qingshu*, shifting from 'letter' to 'book': 'This is a book unveiling true love.' (Lu Jun 1995: 391) Not a single editorial comment is given in the preface by Lu Yin. This means that there were only a few months between production and first publication of the correspondence. It should be noted that the original serialisation of the letters will have contributed to the preservation of the sequence of the letters, although it is unclear whether the book publication is completely identical to the original version.²²

The most clearly structured collection in this respect is *Liangdi shu* by Xu Guangping and Lu Xun. Letters precisely cover periods of a not-shared bed, periods of four months twice and less than one month once, respectively, spanning a period of four years, i.e. 1925 to 1929, and excluding one month (November 1932) of correspondence preceding publication of the *Liangdi shu* in 1933 (see Wang Dehou 1995: 225–44). The longest time-span along with respective changes in sequence is present in the correspondence of Bai Wei and Yang Sao. Their published letters were exchanged between 1924 and 1932.

When informing readers about the motivation for the publication of love-letters, their authors and subsequent compilers in many cases draw general legitimation from any kind of fulfilment. This becomes particularly obvious when *qingshu* collections are complemented by letters of congratulation and other documentary evidence for a marriage that followed the exchange of letters. Implicitly, if biographical conditions are examined, a love potentially conflicting with social norms could be vigorously justified by its literary outcome. Hence the symbolic capital created internally, i.e. between the partners, could be seen as converted into capital valid in the literary field as well.

Last Night by Bai Wei and Yang Sao takes a particular position in that it can by no means be read as the document of a fulfilled love, unlike what most other collections claim. Accordingly, it is most outspoken about strategic approaches to the literary field and gives evidence of a sharp sense, also with regard to the genre of *qingshu*. In his detailed editorial account, Yang Sao stated:

Our love has perished, yet as if the first act of a not yet concluded tragedy had been staged. What is love? We did not

know clearly at all. At that time, we were both venerating Platonic love and quite heavily affected by trashy catch-phrases such as 'marriage is love's grave'. Later on, when I was in South Asia, I gradually descended from the Paradise of Soul to the filthy and leisurely Hell of Flesh, which made me come back with a disease of unknown origin. Due to my scarce knowledge in sexual matters, I damaged her body and it was impossible that we went on with our love. (Bai Wei and Yang Sao 1994: 3)

On the other hand, the very fact of publishing is labelled 'odd and bitter'. Yang Sao reports he consulted many friends and was finally convinced because 'to get some money could ease our poverty a bit.' (Bai Wei and Yang Sao 1994: 2).

Jiang Guangci was quite outspoken when talking about why he published 'Memorial Stone' which almost appears as a substitute:

I always wanted to write a book with the story of me and her [. . .]. But each time when I took up my brush, my heart became upset and my mind so disturbed, [. . .] so that up until this day I have not written down a single character.' (Preface Nov 6, 1927, Jiang Guangci 1982-88, Vol. 3: 97)

Indications about editorial intervention in the text itself are usually scarce. The less effective the motivation (fixed in Luo Hong's and Zhu Wen's title *From Literature to Love*) is, the more details usually are disclosed. In the case of Bai Wei and Yang Sao we are informed that some letters were excluded from the collection because they were written in Japanese. Moreover, 'just to bind them together with one from you and one from me, everything [integrally] from beginning to end [. . .], would just have made it another love-letter collection of several hundreds of thousands of words.' It must be added, however, that *Last Night* is certainly not the slimmest among *qingshu* volumes. Nevertheless, in this case as well as in others, it proves impossible to determine to which extent letters were edited and polished, except, for example for substitution of persons' names by letters from the Latin alphabet. It is equally impossible to establish the criteria for exclusion of letters in every single case, simply because of the fact that the original letters have not been preserved. From the preface, we may gather that the editing was done mainly by Yang Sao with Bai Wei's consent, since it was he who felt sorry about the volume signalling the conclusion of their joint (literary) ventures.

In the case of Jiang Guangci, it is difficult to tell whether his assertion that he did not alter a single character is reliable. Quite revealingly, however, he mentioned that some of the letters were already lost, due to his ambulant life ('I do not know today where I shall be tomorrow') and that he wanted to keep them together (Jiang Guangci 1982-88, Vol. 3: 98). Due to the loss (or, as a deliberate decision by Jiang, exclusion) of the earliest letters, we can only guess what the nature of their early relationship was.

A great exception and an extraordinary opportunity for research, overtly caused by the 'literary hagiography' Bourdieu referred to, is provided by the letters exchanged between Xu Guangping and Lu Xun, as well as the text submitted to the publishing house for the *Letters Between Two Places*. Both are extant and have recently even been published (Xu Guangping and Lu Xun 1996). Thanks to the meticulous work done by Wang Dehou (1991, first published in 1981), any material desirable for a critical edition is available. The publication of *Liangdi shu* was the result of a careful joint work, done with such care that the most recent production could not be included.

Although by no means emerging from what I have defined as a literary couple and never intended to be published as a correspondence, but subsequently published in a very heterogeneous form, the letters exchanged between Wang Yingxia and Yu Dafu doubtlessly belong to the *qingshu* genre. They have, however, been forced together to form a *qingshu* collection in a number of volumes from the series mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, with her share based upon the probably most thorough critical edition of any modern literary text (Martin 1970), apart from Mao Zedong's writings.

Distances and communication

In the collections reviewed, a great range of physical distances can be found, from the distance between the North-Western university district and downtown Beijing (Lu Yin and Li Weijian), or from central Tokyo to some suburban area (Bai Wei and Yang Sao), from the urban centre of gravitation in Shanghai to various places in the Jiangnan area, either Wusong for health purposes (Wu Shutian and Zhang Yiping) or Hangzhou for poetic purposes (Yang Meilei and Zhu Qianzhi), or between a number of provincial cities with the poet who defined himself as 'being on the move' (Jiang Guangci and Song Ruoyu). In this respect, too, the *Letters Between Two Places*, not only by virtue of their very title, are most clearly structured, as the periods

of time with exchange of letters are explicitly attributed to places. On the other extreme, we find the greatest number of places in the *qingshu* exchange between Bai Wei and Yang Sao. Though again not included in a *qingshu* collection in the strictest sense, the most radical example of 'different places' should be mentioned here, even more so since it is collected by the most experienced *qingshu* writers, i.e. Wu Shutian and Zhang Yiping. Under the heading of 'Sealed Emotions Sent to the Yellow Sources', the writer Shi Pingmei (1902–28) addressed a series of letters to her husband Gao Junyu (1896–1925), a year after he had passed away, telling him she experienced 'repeated new encounters' with him that 'opened up new horizons' for her (Wu Shutian 1933: 67). She finally reported that she had done physically what Jiang Guangci did with a literary work for himself and Song Ruoyu: 'Friends who never met you, frequently go to your tomb to drink some wine and have a picnic, to sing aloud their grief. It is all thanks to their help that I managed to erect a memorial stone, to plant a tree and to relocate your tomb.' (ibid.: 75).

Contemporary communication theorists would be delighted with the *bon mot* by Georg Christoph Lichtenberg (1742–99) who enumerates a number of instruments, all connected with existence, which all have the form of a tube: the reproductive organs, the pen (one may add: the 'brush', conventionally used with the very measure-word 'tube') and the gun (Lichtenberg 1968, 1: 349–50). It is not surprising to see many a *qingshu* writer obsessed with the channels of communication, more exactly with postal services. In the preface Lu Yin wrote to her correspondence with Li Weijian, the representative of these services, the postman, even becomes merged with metaphors of spring, because of the colour of his uniform (Lu Jun 1995: 274). Even the telephone, at the time a rather exclusive means of communication in China, makes its appearance. Li Weijian complains that Lu Yin had not received a letter announced by telephone and condemns the medium for its illusion of closeness, whereas Xu Zhimo, when in Paris and frequently sending cables to Hu Shi in Beijing for inquiries on Lu Xiaoman's state of health, in a letter to her bursts out in nearly futurist praise of technical means, as long-distance calls have become available from London, sketching a paradise of communications in which, 'as in Germany, every household has a radio-post', as opposed to the at least 40 days a letter needs to be answered (Xu Zhimo 1991, Vol. 5 'Shuxin ji': 19). These modifications of the usual postal ways can all be summarised under the heading of acceleration.

Similarly, Song Ruoyu devotes a whole paragraph in a letter to Jiang Guangci to hypothetical and actual ways of correspondence. We read that she sent a total of five letters from Xinyang, Hebei (where she taught at the No.2 Women's Normal School), one of them written in the train station (meaning close to communication channels) and that only two of them arrived. 'I am sure they were lost in the post or the university employees have not delivered them.' (Jiang Guangci 1982-88, Vol. 3: 101) Yet there are also other sources of interference, in this very case a highly revealing one: only a few months later, after love vows had been exchanged and Jiang had repeatedly urged her to continue her studies in Beijing, some of her (female) students seem to have used some of her envelopes, or even opened them, to send a message to Jiang blaming him for having suggested that she go to Beijing (ibid.: 119).²³

The teacher-student relationship

Especially in the initial phases of written communication, the definition of mutual roles is a marked concern in all love-letter collections. It is striking how frequently and insistently the model of a teacher-student relationship (*shisheng guanxi*) occurs, no matter at which stage of the relationship, thereby confirming a very traditional pattern.

To give some examples, the fact that Jiang Guangci had already gained a certain reputation as a poet favoured the establishment of a *shisheng* relationship on Song Ruoyu's part. Though she had a tiring university teaching job with a much tighter schedule than Jiang Guangci, stereotypes of inability abound in her letters, particularly where literature is concerned: 'I cherish strolling about in the countryside, but it is a pity I have no literary *finesse*, so I cannot describe its real beauty. If my friend [i.e. you] were here, he would certainly write a poem on its beauty.' However, she soon ventures a poem although she had 'never written one before', just 'out of a moment of happiness', and asks him 'not to consider it a poem'. (Jiang Guangci 1982-88, Vol. 3: 110)

In various letters to Lu Yin, Li Weijian calls his writing 'disturbed, crazy, and hotchpotch', which he attributes to his inability, and admits that he does not equal her in literature (e.g. Lu Jun 1995: 279). Nevertheless, a flirting struggle for the roles of teacher and student, educator and educated is going on, but soon decided in favour of Lu Yin being the *shi*: 'You are educating me. You are even giving me inspiration. [. . .] Do you think it is too much to say you are my new life?' (Lu Jun 1995: 295). Whether Lu Yin, who once

declared she was not too familiar with Western literatures but liked Shelley, had grasped the allusion to Dante and Beatrice remains unclear, yet she almost certainly knew Yu Dafu's diaries published some two years before, under the motto of 'new life', describing his passion for Wang Yingxia (Yu Dafu 1984, 9: 77–114).

In the relationship between Bai Wei and Yang Sao, which started quite fraternally, at some point he plainly states: 'You are more intelligent than I am.' (Bai Wei and Yang Sao 1994: 149) Even in Ding Ling's 'non love-letter', supposedly addressed to Feng Xuefeng, though no explicit reference is made, the teacher–student relationship is present: she signs with *devushka* (Russian for 'girl', 'young woman') which appears in a more individualised light if one knows that Feng Xuefeng had actually been her teacher of Russian for some time.

It should not go unmentioned in this context that as soon as roles were defined in the correspondence between Xu Guangping and Lu Xun, where an actual *shisheng* relationship had preceded the relationship and been the pretext for getting closer in touch, the title *shi* becomes the couple's internal convention for some time, in the Westernised form of 'my dear teacher'. The by no means merely romantic topos of the singularity of the beloved, to be found throughout the ages from the *Gilgamesh* epic to the *ci* poetry by Li Qingzhao, eventually finds its paradox expression in sometimes true 'acronymia' in terms of address. Generally speaking, terms of address and their shifts would deserve more detailed attention than it is possible to give them here.

Authentication of emotions

Upon establishment of well-defined roles, mutual assertions of the authenticity of emotions are quite naturally a crucial concern, frequently dubbed with a vocabulary with religious reference, such as the 'sincere heart', or with 'truth', 'trust' and so forth. Since its medium is language, this process of repeated authentication may be understood in terms of internally created symbolic values, to use Bourdieu's expression, meaning that it is a process within the couple prior to its investment in the literary field in the form of a *qingshu* collection. It is striking to see how this 'symbolic value' seems to be affected by a rapid inflation. If in a number of instances, sudden passages or complete letters in *wenyan* appear, it may be considered an expression of mistrust towards the return value of the medium available, i.e. modern vernacular or *baihua*. A comparable role plays

the shift to fashionable English, to be found excessively in Xu Zhimo and also in Yu Dafu. Hence, to stick to economic terms, this can be interpreted as investment into a currency considered more solid and less susceptible to inflation.

Some letters from Song Ruoyu to Jiang Guangci are written in *wenyan*, the first after they had met for the first time in July 1925 in Beijing and spent some days and nights in a hostel (Jiang Guangci 1982-88, Vol. 3: 131), the second after she had realised that there were rumours about her relationship with Jiang Guangci in her home town Kaifeng, thus taking some linguistic distance after they had overcome physical distance, or as a means of keeping emotions under control (ibid.: 138-9). Soon afterwards, however, betrothal arrangements were made and Song Ruoyu's parents' consent to a marriage was obtained. The same is true for Li Weijian who also switched to *wenyan* in one letter to Lu Yin when seemingly moved. From then on, the 'removed mask' (Lu Yin) and 'craziness' as source of truth (Li Weijian) became established as metaphors for the authenticity of their respective feelings.

Closely related to distrust towards any medium of language are various expressions of 'the inexpressible'. Emotions are repeatedly referred to as what is not to be put into language. In a similar vein, Yu Dafu even managed to make 'love' a four-letter word in some of his letters addressed to Wang Yingxia, by writing 'l-e' (Yu Dafu 1984, 9: 345, 348 *passim*). This element has found its nicest expression, proposing the ideal of a truly individualised language, or rather a script to be legible only by the lovers, in a poem by Zhang Yiping. It is entitled 'Letter Without Words':

I wrote on the letter half-day long,
but the sheet is still blank as it was before.
In my head I find abundance of dreadfully unhappy words,
yet I cannot write out any unhappy character.

I wrote on the letter half-day long,
[. . .]
yet my emotion fills my eyes with abundance of dreadfully bitter tears.

I wrote a letter without words,
and on it shed some drops of my dreadfully bitter tears.
I take out a letter without words,
and seal it with some pearls of my tears.

This is a letter without words—
 Nobody can understand this letter's meaning!
 I send it to my beloved sweetheart,
 [only] her tears, of course, can read out what the letter means.

(‘Wu zi de xin’, Zhang Yiping 1928: 34–6)

Here we find unmistakably the image of an encoding and decoding process, though paradoxically presented in decoded form. The authenticity of the ‘sweetheart’s’ emotions, represented in her tears, offers the key for decoding. This implies an individualisation of the message, quite opposed to what his letter-writing practice actually was (as we have seen above), yet it also shows the faith that a complete decoding process is possible.

The quest for authenticity which is typical for the *qingshu* has its earliest literary sources in the Japanese *shishôsetsu* genre. The diminishing symbolic value of this element is nicely ironised in ‘Mifeng’ (‘Honey-bees’) by Zhang Tianyi, a story in the form of five letters, not incidentally written in 1931 when the *qingshu* genre was at a turning point. The male writer of these letters starts his correspondence (of which just one side is literacised, whereas the woman’s letters appear under ‘letter received’): ‘Younger sister, you asked to write down any event day by day, and I shall be obedient, thus I diligently write you a letter. I came back home, put down my bag, then went to pee. Having peed a little, I came to write you.’ (Zhang Tianyi 1931: 340)

Love and literature and love of literature

For a number of partnerships that produced *qingshu* collections, literature has been the very point of departure. As already mentioned, a volume of stories by Lu Yin gave way to her acquaintance with Li Weijian. In his first letter to her, he expresses the hope that she will correct his poems, with the purpose of ‘making us spiritual friends for ever.’ (Lu Jun 1995: 276) This proposal soon gives way to something more far-reaching: ‘Let us build the principle of the unity of soul and flesh and construct a world of peace.’ It is clearly related to the ‘antagonisms of the so-called spiritualism and materialism in cultural history’, yet ‘our spirit and our matter cannot be opposed.’ (ibid.: 328–9) The union, however, seems impossible within the present world, and Li Weijian therefore repeatedly stresses his indifference

Ruoyu started to attend Nanjing University, literature became more present in her letters to Jiang Guangci. She writes about reading experiences that include *Les trois mousquetaires* in the translation by Wu Guangjian or the bilingual edition of Byron's poems by Su Manshu. Soon afterwards, the two meet for their first joint literary venture in the stricter sense: she wrote down three stanzas of a poem she had started to translate and which she did not wholly understand. A translation came about in which Song contributed the first five and Jiang the last three stanzas. The piece was called 'Under the Violets'.²⁵ The result was that she declared herself unsatisfied about how he fulfilled his role as a teacher: 'Why did you make me compliments in your letter? Are you not my teacher? Why don't you instruct your pupil, but on the contrary make me compliments? You really did not behave like a teacher.' (Jiang Guangci 1982-88, Vol. 3: 155)

Despite contrary assertions in both directions, Song Ruoyu stayed sceptical about the conditions of marriage, and especially how it might affect literary production: 'According to what I have seen, before getting married, many couples' love is sincere and burning. [. . .] But after their wedding the greatest loss is that they might impede each other in the progress of learning.' (ibid.: 133) Jiang Guangci, in turn, was far more confident about his literary career:

At present, no matter whether I feel pessimistic or optimistic, I am just convinced that the life of a poet is necessarily a floating and vagrant one, and that I will have a floating and vagrant life until my end. But I do not deem this a hardship. On the contrary, it will even help me to become a great poet. (ibid.: 180)

Spirit and flesh

Not all among love-letter writers declared themselves as frightened by sexuality as Yang Meilei did. Even in her letters to Zhu Qianzhi she reworks the theme of celibacy over and over again, by making an elaborate difference between two 'principles', *weihunzhuyi* (celibatarianism) and *dushenzhuyi* (spinsterhood). Ideals of asceticism are present and she is afraid of 'not resisting the temptations' behind which she sees 'love's funeral' and 'love's grave'. Hence the ideal love is put into images of a mother's love for her children. 'Sexual desires might have few disadvantages for men, but for women, they are disastrous.' (Tan Zhengbi: 157)

Zhang Yiping, on the contrary, certainly owed part of his reputation for being frivolous²⁶ to quite straightforward words such as the following: 'Shu[tian], I woke up quite early this morning and thought of you, and wrapped the warm and smooth coverlet around my body, as if I were embracing you. When I laid in the smooth covers, I felt unlimited comfort. I hope you are coming soon!' (Wu and Zhang 1927: 48) In his 'Diary on the Pillow', written during the same stay in hospital, we find a number of revealing and often funny remarks, one immediately referring to the title and dated June 16. It gives glimpses into their past and present marital life:

Since I became ill, my wife and me have not fallen asleep with our heads together for quite a long while.

Before, that is when I was not ill yet, we always slept with our heads together. Because we just had one pillow, I frequently struggled with her while sleeping, sometimes our heads crashed together and banged. Later on, in order to prevent such conflicts, my wife made another pillow for herself. Yet although we had two pillows, our heads still frequently clashed together, something one would not have thought of.

But now, for the detestable illness, we have not fallen asleep with our heads together for quite a long while. (Zhang Yiping 1931: 29)

Except for the expressive poetic formula by Ding Ling on the utopia of sharing part of the working conditions as writers, anticipation of future literary activities is surprisingly rare in the *qingshu* collections. They are downright technical and formal as with Yang Meilei who proposed a rigorous programme for the planned meeting with Zhu Qianzhi during their respective summer vacations in Beijing. It starts with going to Beihai Park early in the morning for reading, then going to the Beijing University library as soon as tourists begin to arrive. She plans to devote 'Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays to Chinese literature, and Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays to Western literature'. Her reading programme includes all genres, 'poetry, fiction, plays, and dramas'. Moreover, she suggests he should learn to play an instrument and writes: 'I hope you make good use of your talents to become a philosophical poet.' The days as Yang Meilei anticipates them are ending with 'writing down remarkable events and impressions in separate note-books' (Tan Zhengbi: 158). In Wu Shutian and Zhang Yiping, reference to work situations is obviously based upon past experience. This is clear when he writes to her,

briefly after she parted from Shanghai to her home in Shanxi province. The emotional commitment of the letter-writer appears as a source of inspiration and energy: 'When I came to my office, my colleagues were not there yet. I started my work happily, as if the Gods of love were standing at my side observing me' (Zhang Yiping 1932: 58) He mentions that when she was not at their apartment when he came home 'you brought with you the paintings you had completed, hung them up on the wall and looked at them, closing one of your eyes. You smiled and we both acclaimed or criticised your day's creation. Though I have not studied painting at all, I still could quietly look at your work. I stood at your side, just smiling. Sometimes, you reached out your hand and put it into my pocket, and sometimes I did likewise' (ibid.: 14). The ideal life of the couple is located far away from the human world, and described in a tune that brings to mind King David's Psalms on the shepherd metaphor: 'I strongly believe there will be the day, my beloved, when we completely abandon all those ugly humans and build our home together, at the place of our ideals: There will be steep mountains, clear and fresh waters, even and rich meadows, tidy forests. You will paint your pictures and I shall recite my poems.'²⁷

Decay of a Short-Lived Genre

There are, from around 1931 onwards, two distinctive elements in love-letter collections that both indicate an increasing distance between the experience of love and the literary experience. For one type, the letters published by Lu Yin and Li Weijian are an example. With few exceptions and despite personal encounters during the correspondence, their partnership seems detached from everyday experience. Precise date indications are missing, and even the names 'seagull' and 'cloud' mutually given, without any connection whatsoever to existing formalised names, might be considered an indication of distance from the human world. For the other type, Wu Shutian and Zhang Yiping are representatives, most clearly the latter who is handling the writing of love-letters as mere technique to participate in the literary field, from his discursive reflections (1930) to the compliment unaffected by modesty he makes on one contributor, in the Preface to his wife's compilation: 'Her love-letters are more elegantly and diligently written than mine.' (Wu Shutian 1933: i)

After 1931, there are two marked examples of a strategic rupture with the freshly established tradition of writing (and compiling)

qingshu in vernacular that are going decisively beyond the oscillation of using or excluding the genre designation *qingshu* in the title. The first example is by Lu Xun who declared that the *Letters Between Two Places* he exchanged with Xu Guangping had nothing to do with 'the so-called *qingshu*'. The second is by Ding Ling who used the negation of the genre designation as the title of a love-letter quoted above, expressing both the declining reputation of *qingshu* and the failure of the seemingly autobiographical love, yet without discussing the genre in any manner.

For Lu Xun, his argument on *qingshu* (interestingly enough addressed to a couple, namely in a letter of December 6, 1934, to Xiao Hong and Xiao Jun) sounds fairly sophist. His arguments are that, first, when the correspondence started it was impossible to figure out what would happen afterwards and, second, that age and status of the parties involved made it unlikely that any emotional ties could emerge (Lu Xun 1981, 12: 584-5). Since the first is true for any of the relationships that produced *qingshu* and the second for a number among them, Lu Xun's comments seem to suggest that some of the love-letter compilers had established their relationship in view of publishing the letters, i.e. with a literary strategic approach. It also suggests that *qingshu* are, as a rule, fictionalised and negate any authenticity. His purely anecdotal 'Foreword' to *Letters Between Two Places* seems to confirm this attitude.²⁸

However, the paradox conclusion drawn from this material, that *Letters Between Two Places* as a matter of fact are not 'so-called *qingshu*', but rather '*qingshu* of a unique style' (Wang Dehou 1991: 258) sounds somehow unsatisfactory and in any case does not really make clear what has happened to the *qingshu*, except for its having an overtly bad reputation with Lu Xun. Yet all the material is available to posit these remarks by Lu Xun precisely within Bourdieu's literary field, in order to smooth if not solve the paradox inherent in Wang Dehou's formulation.²⁹ An old friend of Lu Xun relates that when publishing the *Letters Between Two Places* was still a vague plan, Lu Xun inquired with him whether 'a bundle [*yi kun*] of love-letters' would possibly be of any interest to the readership (Wang Dehou 1991: 252-3), thus ironically referring to Zhang Yiping's already mentioned 'bundle' (*yi shu*), which had been followed by the publication of a 'second bundle' (*er shu*).³⁰

It seems that a functional split took place in which *qingshu* played either the part of 'love for literature's sake', or 'literature for love's sake', or a mixture of both. Though strictly speaking not attributable to

the respective function the (then alternative) title *From Literature to Love* of the 1931 collection by Luo Hong and Zhu Wen speaks an openly strategic language. On the other hand, 'love for literature's sake' is the attitude Lu Xun implicitly associated with *qingshu* compilers.

The split in functions also implies that an increasing number of collections were published whose authors have not made any other appearance. An example are the *Chulian qingshu* (*Letters of a Beginning Love*) from 1933 and with a second edition in 1935, by Qian Huiying and Zhu Shaoceng. In addition to the strategic subtitle 'A Guide to Love' that explicitly leaves out any participation in the literary field, the volume carries the revealing dedication 'to commemorate our engagement'. This includes a change of perspective in testifying authenticity of emotion. No longer is the partner or are other producers of literature asked for authentication, but rather the readership.

It is not purely incidental that in the same year (1933) a first comprehensive handbook on love-letter writing in *baihua* makes its appearance (Wei Yuelü 1933) and also seemed successful, going into its third reprint in 1935. Authoring *qingshu* had become a set of techniques and norms generally available, first of all, of course, as a result of the rapid spread of literacy. These techniques are by no means exclusively literary, but also include a whole set of instructions on how to handle the material side of love-letter writing, such as reflections on paper quality, which imprint on envelopes should be used, when a fountain-pen was acceptable and when a brush should be preferred, whether lines should be set vertically or horizontally, etc. Concerns reach as far as how to double-encode the Chinese telegraph number code for privacy (Sect. 3: 5–8). Some of the motives and patterns evoked above now become expressed in plain utilitarian terms: 'But let us talk about love: if both partners are just loving for themselves in their own hearts and in their own minds, this is of course unreasonable! It is necessary to build a road to communicate the love to each other.' (Sect. 1: 2) Hence, the necessity of expression is emphasised rather than the 'inexpressible'. Yet links to the literary field are not completely cut, at least as possible retrospective references: almost half of the volume is made up by a section called 'A Bundle of Love Poems', with its title (*Qingshi yi shu*) obviously referring to the famous work by Zhang Yiping, only varied by one phoneme. Among other examples by famous authors, this compilation also includes poem translations Chen Hengzhe and Hu Shi had once addressed to each other (Wei Yuelü 1933, Sect. 2: 75–9).

Evidently, such a comprehensive set of *qingshu* norms, along with preceding compilations of model letters (e.g. Lin Ying 1931) formed just one element within a broader process of standardisation and norm-setting that included the whole recent tradition, with emphasis on genres, however, that had not existed in typical forms, such as the *qingshu*. Among those quite active and prolific in this field was also the leftist A Ying (1900–77), with a *Dictionary of Descriptions for New Literature* (1930) and a manual *On the Writing of Diary Texts in Vernacular* (1931), and a number of other clearly normative works.³¹ This development culminated in the famed ten-volume *Compendium of New Chinese Literature* of 1935.

In the corresponding social development among educated, i.e. at least literate Chinese, it was no longer necessary or even an option to reinforce publicly a freely chosen partnership by its literary outcome. How far the public availability of love-letter writing went, is unmistakably testified by a catalogue with a 'Selection from the Exhibition of Love-Letters' (1947; Tian Dawei 1992: 1248a). It shows that the process of differentiating and separating a public and a private sphere was not yet concluded. However, this process of unstable symbolic values created and again devalued by using specific techniques related to a genre, is by no means limited to China.³²

The utilitarian attitude towards love-letter writing, winning ground after 1933, has resulted in various peculiarities. The first and most striking is that the letters are no longer seen as part of a dialogue, hence it becomes possible to publish just the male 'seducing' part of such a correspondence. As if to emphasise the technical and instrumental aspect that does not need to rely on any individual authenticity, a collection published in 1935 has even undergone editorial polishing by a certain Chu Taonan (Yao Nailin 1935). It also includes the ever more frequent subdivision of the *qingshu* according to extra-literary criteria, i.e. 'early', 'hot' and 'lost love' (*chu-*, *re-*, *shilian*), a division that has been used up to the present and can be considered a paradigm of decontextualising literary texts. Similarly, already-published *qingshu*, also if originally they were part of a joint collection, become anthologised outside their original dialogical context (whether according to authorship or to chronology is reduced to a minor detail), such as in *Selected Love-letters by Famous Modern Authors* (Qin Shi 1945) where the selection covers *qingshu* collections such as *Letters Between Two Places*, *Memorial Stone*, but also others never published as a correspondence.

Conclusion

The *qingshu* genre combines, in its own way, a number of typical May Fourth concerns. As *xin* it offered itself as an ideal genre for the propagated *baihua* medium, and at the same time as *shu* enjoyed a long-standing literary prestige, still indispensable. By becoming *qingshu*, it could additionally host attempts at reorganising the relationship between the two. These qualities secured its short-lived reputation (or high symbolic value) in the literary field and even, in some cases, made it a working tool to change social conditions of at least one couple, if they had lived in traditional marriage conditions. Yet as soon as it lost this social function, and as soon as *baihua* had met with a more general acceptance, it became gradually associated with 'low culture' (of a low symbolic value) which made it, in the course of the establishment of norms for *baihua* writing, instrumentally available. The high tide with high symbolic value of *qingshu* can be situated between 1923 and 1933, with a peak in 1931.

Postscript

That inflation had not only soon affected *qingshu* as a literary genre is evident from the otherwise quite mutilated copy of the *Dictionary of Love-Letter Writing* at my disposal: the volume was sold at 7,300 yuan.

Notes

- 1 On the cult of victimology, see the polemic reflections in Paglia 1994, particularly in 'The Culture Wars', 97–126.
- 2 I have in mind Lee 1973 as well as scattered remarks in monographs on individual female authors, such as Feuerwerker 1982 on Ding Ling and Goldblatt 1976 on Xiao Hong.
- 3 Published by Huashan wenyi chubanshe in Shijiazhuang in 1993, with Zhai Jianwen as responsible series editor.
- 4 See, as examples, Wang Hui 1991 and Wu Jun 1992 on Lu Xun, with the important chronologically parallel Chinese version of Lee 1987, published in 1991.
- 5 The procedure is well known from Zhou Ye who recorded an account of her father Zhou Jianren's life (Zhou Jianren 1984 and 1988). In the case of the spouses otherwise not making any literary appearance, the procedure may be linked to the methods of oral history which, among other things, aims at giving women a voice (cf. Ong 1982).

towards worldly affairs, whereas Lu Yin sees herself in active opposition. She also proves sceptical towards optimism and common ideas of happiness as embodied in 'a respected husband and a precious wife, plenty of sons and grandsons in the [family] hall', as well as towards the concepts of love and friendship (N^o 22, Lu Jun 1995: 314 and 316). When they exchange their views on literature, Lu Yin rather vaguely indicates a preference for Li Bai and Su Shi, against Du Fu and Wu Meicun.

When curing his tuberculosis at the seaside in Wusong, Zhang Yiping wrote to Wu Shutian, who frequently travelled the some 15 miles from downtown Shanghai, among trivia about shouting dogs who did not let him sleep quietly: 'I am a poor poet and I wonder how I could produce such an expensive illness.' (Wu and Zhang 1931: 46–7) The always critical economic situation of the couple is well known since they were among the authors who sometimes borrowed money from Lu Xun.²⁴ The situation must have been pressing to the extent that Zhang Yiping even took into consideration committing suicide, yet he immediately digresses into a joke about a friend who, for such a purpose, went to the seashore, but when approaching the waters in which he wanted to submerge, suddenly thought of Zhuge Liang and, reciting his lines 'who gave his best and gave his all, until his heart stopped beating', decided not to die.

Even some dialogues between the two are written down literally, although such notes doubtlessly underwent both imaginative abbreviation and editorial polishing:

I spent all day long in the building which was so annoying
[*wuliao*].

[. . .]

My wife said: 'You have bought this pen and written so many articles.'

I threw the pen on the floor and said: 'I shall not write any more articles: If I do not write any more, then it is because I might not survive this damned illness!'

My wife laughed and said: 'Are there not many people under Heaven who have lung problems? Even among those not writing, there are many. Your lung problem is not necessarily serious, so why are you so upset?' (Zhang Yiping 1931: 14–15)

Literary couples' shared concern about matters related to literature in a number of instances resulted in joint ventures either directly included in the *qingshu* collection or discussed there. As soon as Song

- 6 *Xueshi an* (*The Case of the Bloody Corpse*) (1947), *Xin ernü yingxiong zhuan* (*The Story of the New Children Heroes*) (1949), *Shengsi yuan* (*Destined to Live and Die Together*) (1951; also as *Zhong-Chao ernü* (*Children of China and Korea*)). Kong became famous with his novel *Yi ge shaonü fanshen de gushi* (*Story of the Emancipation of a Young Girl*; 1943). The significance of intimate partnership to his creation may be gathered from the fact that he is said to have been excluded from the Writers' Association in 1955 for illicit sexual relationships (Li Liming 1977: 48–9).
- 7 'Yi ge tongxing'ai de shilianzhe' ('A Broken-Hearted Homosexual'), in Zhang Ruogu 1928: (3).
- 8 See their joint collection (Feng Xuefeng 1957). See also Wang Jingzhi 1996. I am indebted to Michel Hockx for kindly putting at my disposal the proofs, with the author's handwritten corrections, of the latter volume, which only came off the presses in June 1996. For further reference to Ying Xiuren and homosexuality, see Hockx 1996: 293–4.
- 9 Cf *Hanyu da cidian*, Vol. 7: 582.
- 10 For more information about the relationship between Ding and Feng, see the chapter entitled 'Zui huainian de ren' (The Most Cherished Man) in Zhang Lechu 1986: 41–8. During the 1996 Leiden workshop 'Modern China: The Literary Field', Leo Ou-fan Lee recalled that Ding Ling had confirmed to him in private communication that Feng was the addressee of her 'non love-letter'. Without mentioning any names, she also referred to 'the only man in the world I ever loved' as an 'open secret' (to Nym Wales, quoted from Ling Yu 1988: 236).
- 11 It went into some dozen of reprints, with alternate titles in Japanese-occupied Manchuria, totalling some 30,000 copies; cf. Gong Mingde 1994.
- 12 *Baihua shuxin*, not unlikely a misprint (revealing Zhang's true focus of interest!) for the three-volume *Xiandai qingshu* (1929), co-edited by the same author.
- 13 All terms are additionally given in English, so we may assume he consulted foreign works which go unmentioned.
- 14 A number of letters that entered into *qingshu* collections, however, were mailed within Beijing, such as those exchanged between Li Weijian and Lu Yin.
- 15 Wang Jingzhi is the source of this information. Given his usually cynical attitude to other people's marital affairs, it should be considered with some reservation.
- 16 'Qingchen de fenbie' and 'Ni zong you ai wo de yi tian' (1925), both reprinted in Guo Yuan 1995: 280–1. I have not been able to identify the poems' sources. They probably must be looked for in some longer poem by E. Barrett-Browning.
- 17 As biographers of Hu Shi relate, the poet Wang Jingzhi, a native of the same district in Anhui as Hu, burnt all documents related to Cao and Hu's love on her request. (Fei Yan and Dong Jingsen 1992: 571–3, see also 41–61).
- 18 Letter to Wu Shutian and Zhang Yiping, Nov 9, 1929 (in Wu Shutian 1933: 45).
- 19 Cf. her letter N° 41 (Nov 17, 1926) where she mentions the first letter Jiang sent to her on 4 June 1920 (Jiang Guangci 1982–88, Vol. 3: 151).

- See also the section devoted to their relationship in Leo Ou-fan Lee 1973: 213–16.
- 20 For the significance of *shisheng* relationships to the literary field, see also Chapter Three.
- 21 The passage appears in Shen Congwen's *Ji Ding Ling* (*Remembering Ding Ling*; 1936). Here quoted from Zhou Liangpei 1993a: 170–1. See also Ling Yu 1988: 230–41, and Kinkley 1987: 67–95.
- 22 I have not been able to consult the *Yishi bao*.
- 23 It is interesting to note that she had prided herself several times of her excellent relationship with her students, marked by equality and not at all following traditional teacher–student patterns. Needless to say she immediately gave up her sympathetic attitude after this incident.
- 24 See his diary entries of 10 December 1928, 11 February 1929 and 2 May 1929 in Lu Xun 1981, Vol. 14: 735 *passim*.
- 25 I have been unable to identify the source.
- 26 cf. Lu Xun 1981, Vol. 7: 435.
- 27 Quotations from the Bible, especially from the New Testament, occur frequently in Zhang's letters.
- 28 Ever since the publication of *Liangdi shu*, Lu Xun's negative concept of *qingshu* found its apologetical beginning, starting with Yu Qin's 1933 article 'Jieshao Liangdi shu bing fantan suo wei qingshu' (An Introduction to Letters Between Two Places and Some Comments on the So-Called Love-Letters), reprinted in Zhang Mengyang 1985–87, Vol. 1: 792–3.
- 29 Silenzi 1993 is a detailed Italian study of the *Letters Between Two Places*, which further explores the paradox.
- 30 It should be added that Lu Xun had a good motivation for vengeance towards Zhang Yiping, since the latter had ironically referred to the still-concealed relationship between Lu Xun and Xu Guangping in a story entitled 'Daxue jiaoshou' ('University Professor'; 1933). Somewhat earlier, the relationship had already inspired a series of satirical poems by Gao Changhong (1926).
- 31 It cannot be ruled out that his obsession with setting standards for the newly emerging genres of new literature also had a creative counterpart. As he frequently used the pen-name Huang Ying at the time, he might also have practised the fashionable *qingshu* genre, concealed by a homophone (though it indicates a female name), as contributor to Lin and Huang 1930.
- 32 To give a recent example: A book fair to be held in Pavia was publicised by asking 50 famous writers to contribute their version and interpretation of the love-letter genre.

Chapter Five _____

Literature High and Low

'Popular fiction' in twentieth-century China

Chen Pingyuan

Introduction

From the beginning of this century, when Liang Qichao propagated a 'fiction revolution' (*xiaoshuo jie geming*) in order to reform the government of the people, until the present time, when fiction is in decline due to the pressures of cinema and television, the fiction genre has not been the only type of literary creation, but it has certainly dominated a hundred years of Chinese writing. The prediction by the new novelists from the late Qing era, that 'the twentieth century will be the age of the flourishing of fiction'¹, has not fallen through. In previous centuries, fiction was not easily allowed into the pantheon of literature, nor is it likely to sustain its splendour in years to come. The twentieth century has been the heyday of Chinese fiction (*xiaoshuo*). It is only natural that as soon as scholars began to notice this 'highest order of literature', large numbers of histories of fiction would come out. The scholarly description of the evolution of Chinese fiction during these hundred years has already begun to take shape. However, the re-emergence of 'popular fiction' (*tongsu xiaoshuo*) at the end of the century has once again blurred what seemed to be a clear picture.

The late Qing new novelists' efforts to reform literature were thwarted; the May Fourth writers were the ones who genuinely ushered in a new epoch in Chinese fiction. After that, they scored victory after victory, right up to the present day. This kind of description, considering May Fourth fiction as 'orthodox', is being more and more fiercely challenged by popular fiction. To support this

statement, the 'resurfacing' of Jin Yong may serve as an example. In the Autumn of 1990, Beijing University started a special course on martial-arts fiction (*wuxia xiaoshuo*). At the time, this did not draw much outside attention. When in October 1994, the university bestowed an honorary professorship on Jin Yong, this was but a logical development and certainly not a big issue. However, since it coincided with the commotion about the ranking of 'literary masters'², it was blown entirely out of proportion. The most acrimonious criticism was not to be read in the newspapers, however, but circulated in private among scholars: Beijing University had betrayed the New Culture legacy.

Founded in 1898, Beijing University was a product of political reform and strengthening efforts by new-style scholars. All through the present century, Beijing University has played a leading role in intellectuals' social involvement. Starting from the May Fourth New Culture Movement, Beijing University, as an integral symbol, has been the standard bearer of a number of democracy movements. Owing to this special status, its every new trend runs the risk of drawing disproportionate attention or being overinterpreted. To quote Zhang Ailing's witticism: 'This is an exaggerated place. When you tumble and fall here, it hurts more than elsewhere.' Beijing University's role in the New Culture Movement is well-known and an important aspect of the New Culture Movement was its scathing attacks on the 'mandarin ducks and butterflies school' based in Shanghai. No matter how highly one elevates Jin Yong's novels, it still remains impossible to deny that they are deeply rooted in the popular fiction of the Republican era. Therefore, Beijing University and Jin Yong are easily understood as the respective symbols of high (*ya*) and low (*su*) culture. It is this slightly prejudiced understanding that triggered the debate over Jin Yong, targeted at Beijing University.

The debate was not just about changes in literary trends, it also touched upon the political situation of China in the 1990s, the changes in the system of education, as well as the transformations in the function of intellectuals.³ For this reason, many aspects of the issue remained untouched or were not explored very deeply. Only the surface was scratched and many oblique accusations were made. Some people took up the challenge and defended the university, saying that the May Fourth vanguard had promoted 'common people's literature' (*pingmin wenxue*) and that they had emphasised the study of and learning from 'folk culture' (*minjian wenhua*).

Admitting the martial-arts novelist Jin Yong⁴ was in line with the university's 'consistent' tradition of openness.

Leaving the oversimplified 'right or wrong' question for the time being, one might limit the debate to the following questions: should academia admit Jin Yong? How should it admit Jin Yong? Does admitting Jin Yong constitute a challenge to the existing narrative of literary history? How does such an 'admission' relate to the May Fourth New Culture tradition? To my mind, the first question has long been solved. Even though there are still plenty of people who will stubbornly maintain that martial-arts fiction cannot be a subject of academic enquiry, there are as many people passionately reading, enjoying and researching this type of fiction. Whether or not one likes Jin Yong (or martial-arts fiction) has long since become a matter of private taste. In academia, too, opinions differ and the parties usually leave each other in peace. Only when it was attempted to bring Jin Yong's writing into the standard system of knowledge and to obtain large-scale social recognition for it, was the inveterate contradiction activated. 'Rejecting' or 'admitting' Jin Yong⁵ subsequently became a favourite 'issue' for the media. Even a year later, the media were still incessantly 'fighting over' the status of Jin Yong's fiction. The academic community, whose priorities differ from those of the media, was not very eager to join in, but even if the notoriously cool and collected literary historians managed to dodge the cameras, they could not dodge the subject of Jin Yong.

It is highly ironical that, due to this strange combination of circumstances, Beijing University, where once the 'Literary Revolution' was started, came to rehabilitate the 'offspring' of the popular fiction that the New Culture people had once so despised. One could simply conclude that 'times change', but that would be underestimating the significance of the topic. In my view, if one casts aside all the incidental factors, what the university did was more than a trivial deed.⁶ It inadvertently touched upon a problem that scholars had never seriously dealt with before and that needed to be confronted: the position of popular fiction in twentieth-century China.

Even though scholars had attempted, from the mid-1980s onwards, to bring 'mandarin ducks and butterflies' and other popular fiction genres into their scope of research, the results had been far from ideal. As I pointed out elsewhere, popular fiction has been incorporated by literary historians in three different ways. They have included some individual popular fiction writers into

existing frameworks of literary history, they have compiled independent histories of popular fiction, or they have emphasised the opposition between high and low as the fundamental characteristic of twentieth-century Chinese fiction, which they then tried to grasp as a whole (cf. Chen 1993: 113–22). Except for the independent histories, the two other strategies both face the problem of how to position popular fiction. Even if it is not embodied in dramatic debates over the ‘ranking’ of Jin Yong and Mao Dun, discussions of twentieth-century Chinese fiction can hardly ignore the existence of ‘masters’ of popular fiction such as Zhang Henshui and Jin Yong. Few people will disagree when you call Jin Yong a master of popular fiction, but as soon as it becomes necessary to incorporate his achievements into literary history, even complete outsiders are quick to express their righteous indignation. To put it simply, in the eyes of experts and of normal readers, popular fiction is no real ‘literature’. This common bias against popular literature is rooted in the ‘myth of literature’ that was constructed during the May Fourth period. Therefore, we should shift our focus to the beginning of this century.

Popular fiction and common people’s literature

Owing to the success of the New Culture Movement and its enormous motivating effect on later generations, the Literary Revolution has slowly developed into a ‘creation myth’. Scholars have been overly relying on the ways in which Hu Shi, Lu Xun, Mao Dun and others summed up their own undertakings, so that research is hard put to exceed the limits of the historical recollection of those involved. For example, the proponents of the May Fourth literary revolution, wanting to secure their own living space and to establish their position in literary history, overstated their ‘clean break with the past’, obliterating the historical achievements of their forerunners from the late Qing ‘fiction revolution’, and adopted an exclusively antagonistic attitude even to those who continued to write such ‘new fiction’ (*xin xiaoshuo*) in the 1920s and 1930s. For those involved in these historical activities, such an attitude was natural and reasonable, but if a literary historian directly takes over their conclusions, it does not seem so natural or reasonable any more. To mention but one obvious example: the new writers of the May Fourth period, according to their own literary ideals, constantly criticised the works of ‘old style literati’, saying that they ‘cannot be called literature’ (*bu*

neng suan wenxue). These 'non-literary' works consisted for the largest part of popular fiction. Let us see how the advocates of new literature delineated and defined this genre.

First of all, literary critics of the late Qing and May Fourth periods hardly used the concept of *tongsu xiaoshuo* (popular fiction). The only exception is a lecture presented by Liu Bannong at Beijing University in early 1918, which was entitled 'Tongsu xiaoshuo de jiji jiaoxun yu xiaoji jiaoxun' ('The Positive Lesson and the Negative Lesson to be Learned from Popular Fiction'). Liu outlined his subject by saying that *tongsu xiaoshuo* was the English 'popular story', which was defined in English as follows:

- 1 Suitable to common people; easy to comprehend.
- 2 Acceptable or pleasing to the people in general. (Liu Fu 1918: 1)

There is nothing remarkable about this definition, which he had copied from a dictionary. What is interesting is how Liu extends and develops the notion: popular fiction is 'fiction common to the upper, middle and lower classes. It is surely not fiction meant for the exchange of ideas and ambitions by philosophers and scientists, nor is it fiction meant for literati and scholars to vent their complaints and show off their skills.' As examples of fiction which 'vents complaints and shows off skills' are given *Hua yue hen* (*Regrets Over Flowers and Moonlight*) and *Liaozhai zhiyi* (*Strange Stories from The Studio of Idleness*); with some effort, according to Liu, *Shuihu zhuan* (*Water Margin*) and *Hong lou meng* (*Red Chamber Dream*) can be seen as fiction for 'the exchange of ideas and ambitions'. As for what really belonged to popular fiction, Liu put forward *Jingu qiguan* (*Wonders of the Present and the Past*), *Sanguo yanyi* (*Romance of the Three Kingdoms*) and *Qixia wuyi* (*Seven Valiants and Five Righteous*). Apart from emphasising the point that popular fiction featured an element of entertainment and that it was appreciated by the general public (*dazhong*), Liu also assumed that it did not contain profound thought. He therefore concluded by saying: 'In the future, when mankind's knowledge has progressed and everyone is able to read fiction of lofty content, popular fiction will naturally perish and what I have just said will be utterly worthless.' (Liu Fu 1918: 10)

Two months later, Liu Bannong gave another public lecture at Beijing University, this time entitled 'Zhongguo zhi xiadeng xiaoshuo' ('China's Lower Class Fiction'), in which he mainly discussed the *tanci* ('verses for picking') and *changben* ('song texts')

that were popular in the lower strata of society. However, his emphasis on the need for literature to divert its attention from the 'gentry school' to the 'common people's school', is coherent with the train of thought outlined above. Under the aegis of popular fiction, Liu considered the needs of 'the lower classes', while at the same time advocating 'common people's literature'. This is typical of his work, which links up late Qing and May Fourth. The late Qing new novelists primarily distinguished between the functions of different types of fiction (political fiction, science fiction (*kexue xiaoshuo*), romance fiction (*yanqing xiaoshuo*), etc.), though they would occasionally consider the different needs of different readers. Xia Zengyou, for instance, suggested a division of Chinese fiction into two schools: 'One will cater to the needs of scholars and literati, the other to the needs of women and coarse folk' (Chen and Xia 1989: 61). When Guan Daru discussed fiction, he also distinguished between a version 'for the upper classes' (*wei shangdeng ren*) and one 'for the lower classes' (cf. Chen and Xia 1989: 371-87). The upper classes' attitude of looking down upon and 'narrating for' the lower classes, was strongly censured during the May Fourth period. Taking its place was the concept of 'common people's literature', as advocated by Zhou Zuoren and others.

The concept of 'common people's literature', defined and elucidated by Zhou Zuoren, was more easily accepted by readers than Chen Duxiu's vague notion of 'national literature' (*guomin wenxue*) or Hu Shi's overly arbitrary 'living literature' (*huo wenxue*), even though all three of them opposed 'elite literature' (*guizu wenxue*).⁷ Initially, Zhou's statements that 'common people's literature should record ordinary thoughts and events in an ordinary style' and 'sincere thoughts and events in a sincere style' failed to grasp the main point. He then made two additions, saying that 'common people's literature is definitely not popular literature' and 'common people's literature is definitely not philanthropist literature.' Zhou said that this was what he most feared people would 'misunderstand'. In fact, it was these two points that created a distance between himself and people like Hu Shi. While Hu Shi, in order to advocate the vernacular *baihua*, strongly commended chapter fiction (*zhanghui xiaoshuo*) such as *Water Margin* and *Xiyou ji* (*Journey to the West*), Zhou Zuoren, in his essay 'Ren de wenxue' ('Human Literature'), ranked these among the 'superstitious books about ghosts' and 'books about bandits', denouncing them as 'inhuman literature' (*feiren de wenxue*), which 'obstructs the growth

of human nature and destroys humanity's peace.' According to Zhou, in the whole of Chinese literary history, only *Red Chamber Dream* qualified as true 'common people's literature'. Zhou said that this kind of literature 'is not written especially for the common people' and 'need not be understood by every "man in the field" (*tianfu yelao*)', but should act as 'a prophet (*xianzhi*) or guide (*yinlu ren*)', attempting to raise the common people's powers of appreciation (*jianshang nengli*) and intellectual taste (*sixiang quwei*). Common people's literature was advocated in order to uplift others, rather than to lower oneself. Such were the innermost feelings of the May Fourth writers. Even as late as the 1930s, when the 'popularisation' (*dazhonghua*) slogans were shouted all around, Guo Moruo still held that 'mass literature' was not 'literature of the masses', but ought to be 'literature that guides the masses' (Guo Moruo 1930: 632).

Zhou Zuoren's essays 'Common People's Literature' and 'Human Literature', published in 1918, were the most influential literary treatises of the May Fourth period. The contempt for traditional Chinese fiction that they reveal at first sight seems close to Liang Qichao's criticism ('Generally speaking, it [traditional Chinese fiction] does not go beyond propagating either sex or violence' (*zong qi dajiao, bu chu huiyin huido liangduan*) (Chen and Xia 1989: 21)). However, when Liang made this statement in his 'Yiyin zhengzhi xiaoshuo xu' ('Preface to *Political Novels in Translation*'), he had little understanding of either Chinese or Western fiction. After he had founded the journal *Xin xiaoshuo* (*New Fiction*), his tone changed drastically and he no longer made any irresponsible remarks about *Water Margin* or *Red Chamber Dream*. When Zhou Zuoren made his statements, however, he already possessed considerable knowledge of the subject and he consciously judged Chinese fiction from the perspective of Western literary theory. As late as the 1950s, Zhou Zuoren still maintained that *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* did not deserve its reputation: 'I recently reread it, honestly trying to appreciate it, but I just do not understand what is so good about it.' When Zhou reads novels, he has his own perspective. He looks, for instance, at a novel's 'attitude towards women', or asks 'whether or not it is hypocritical' or if it has a 'humane spirit'. Herein lies the basis for his high opinion of *Red Chamber Dream* and his extremely negative judgement on the equally famous *Water Margin* and *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*.⁸ In Zhou Zuoren's way of thinking, all Chinese chapter fiction, except *Red Chamber Dream*, belongs to the realm of popular literature, 'containing elements of playfulness and exaggeration' and 'specifically meant

for the common people', which differs clearly from the ideal of 'common people's literature'.

If the argument above appears to be somewhat deductive, it is helpful to consult the essay 'Ribei jin sanshi nian xiaoshuo zhi fada' ('The Development of Japanese Fiction During the Past Thirty Years'), which was also published in 1918. Zhou attaches the label 'popular fiction' to all Japanese fiction from before the Meiji period, claiming that it 'suits the mentality of the lower classes' and that 'the reason for writing is either to provide entertainment or to teach a lesson'. This kind of criticism is completely in line with his attack on traditional Chinese fiction in 'Human Literature'. It is therefore not surprising that, in this essay, he suddenly turns to Liang Qichao's advocacy of a 'fiction revolution', calling it 'very similar to the situation at the beginning of the Meiji period.' If studying Western fiction is made the norm of 'new fiction', even *Red Chamber Dream* 'can only be acknowledged as a good work of old fiction', making 'old and new' basically equal to 'East and West'. Except for *Red Chamber Dream* and *Rulin waishi* (*The Scholars*), which are not so easily dismissable, Zhou has a tendency to classify all pre-twentieth-century Chinese fiction as 'popular fiction'.

As an individual view, Zhou Zuoren's harsh judgement on Chinese fiction is not devoid of profundity. It is clear, however, that his is not the perspective of an historian, but the style of an essayist, mainly serving the ideological battles and literary movements of his time. Both Liu Bannong and Zhou Zuoren realised that *Red Chamber Dream* was special and dared not hastily dismiss it as popular fiction. This point will be further discussed below. First, however, I want to examine the idea that chapter fiction is the same as popular fiction, which is an important hypothesis established during the May Fourth period. 'The Development of Japanese Fiction During the Past Thirty Years' contains one of Zhou's famous phrases, which is frequently cited by historians:

To distinguish new fiction from old fiction, the thought is of course important, but the form is also very important. The unfree form of old fiction surely cannot hold new thought, just like the forms of old poetry [*jiu shi jiu ci jiu qu*] cannot hold new thought. (Zhou Zuoren 1918; Rui *et al.* 1984: 714)

The phrase 'the unfree form of old fiction' here mainly refers to the chapter form. May Fourth writers and critics held that 'chapters restrict the writing space (*pianfu*), while the necessity for antithesis in

chapter headings does not allow for natural and satisfactory description.' They also said that 'the chapter format is too inflexible, restricting the author's free expression.' (cf. Rui *et al.* 1984: 714, 754) It is of course very convenient to adopt the chapter form as the main standard by which to determine whether a writer is 'old' or 'new', but it is in fact a far cry from the 'common people's spirit' flaunted by May Fourth and it is contradictory to the original intention of the *baihua* movement.

It may seem that Hu Shi's appreciation of chapter fiction and Zhou Zuoren's criticism of the form represent two completely opposite scholarly perspectives. During the May Fourth new culture movement, however, these two seemingly contrasting fiction concepts actually worked in concert and agreement with each other. This has to do with the different argumentative strategies employed by the proponents of New Culture. In their discussions of history, they would search for justifications of literary reform and therefore needed chapter fiction, with its long-standing tradition and broad readership, as their ally. In actual practice, however, their efforts to import the thought and form of Western fiction did not leave room for much sympathy for chapter fiction, which dominated the literary scene of their time. It is not my intention to obliterate the differences in the scholarly views of Hu and Zhou, but to emphasise that they both belonged to the same literary movement. As further evidence, one might add that Hu Shi's appreciation of chapter fiction was limited to works from before May Fourth and that Hu harboured strong misgivings about the value of chapter fiction as a literary genre.

When Chen Duxiu (1917) and Hu Shi (1917) determined a text's being 'living' or 'dead' by its usage of *baihua* or *wenyan*, the 'literary orthodoxy' that they supported was that of the chapter fiction of Shi Nai'an and Cao Xueqin. Why was it that this 'plain and expressive national literature' that was praised over and over again in the context of the resistance against 'the eighteen demons of classical literature', was simultaneously faced with the adversity of being discarded because of its 'inflexible format'? It seems that, in the end, the tracing of historical sources for vernacular literature was only meant to serve the overall aim of reforming Chinese literature with Western literature. It is therefore hardly surprising that, as soon as *baihua* had 'defeated' *wenyan*, 'literature in the national language' (*guoyu de wenxue*) became the new slogan and the reformers' former ally, chapter fiction, was smoothly ousted.

The conflict between East and West and the opposition between high and low

Even though the May Fourth writers time and again flaunted their 'common people's conscience' and used it to oppose the 'élitist' 'old literature', the literary preferences of Hu Shi and others were far from democratic. The new literature adepts advocated to 'pervade the literary world with democracy (*demokelaxi*)' and their slogan was 'wipe out élitist literature and release common people's literature'. As for concrete measures, however, they suggested 'unaltered introduction of Western things' (Rui *et al.* 1984: 722). The most conspicuous characteristic of the May Fourth writers is that they criticised their predecessors' concept of 'Chinese essence Western function' (*Zhongti xiyong*) for its lack of 'upright imitation' of things Western and that they forcefully promoted the wholesale acceptance of Western literary thought and aesthetics. During this period of epochal changes in China, there may have been a historical rationale for their preference for 'direct translation' (*zhiyi*), 'eclecticism' (*nalaizhuyi*) and 'unaltered introduction', but one can hardly maintain that this was based on 'common people's conscience'. In view of the standard of literacy, the spread of education and the understanding of Western culture at the time, 'unaltered introduction' of Western things was not at all easily acceptable for the majority of people. There can be no doubt that the strategy of adaption and modification (*yibu bianxing*) adopted by the late-Qing new novelists was much more considerate of the reading level and tastes of average Chinese readers.

The scope of reception of fiction from the May Fourth period is difficult to estimate, but stories like Lu Xun's 'Kuangren riji' (Diary of a Madman) seem only to have circulated in schools and among intellectuals. The real 'common people' were still reading chapter fiction, with its intricate plots and strong element of entertainment. In 1922, Mao Dun complained that average readers of fiction only paid attention to plot (*qingjie*) and not to tone (*qingdiao*) or style (*fengge*) (Mao Dun 1922: 1). As late as the 1930s and 1940s, when the New Culture movement had already scored a decisive victory, chapter fiction continued to have 'a really broad readership' and 'the sales of [Lu Xun's] *Nahan* (*Call to Arms*) or [Mao Dun's] *Ziye* (*Midnight*) were absolutely no match for those of [Zhang Henshui's] *Tixiao yinyuan* (*Fate in Tears and Laughter*) and [Bu Xiao Sheng's] *Jianghu qixia zhuan* (*Amazing Valiants From All Corners of the Country*)' (Xu Wenying 1941). I am not trying to argue that there

is a linear connection between scope of readership and artistic accomplishment. I am merely trying to point out that the main May Fourth literary slogan, 'common people's literature', was only suitable for criticising classical writing, collecting folk songs and popular stories and raising the status of fiction and drama. When it came to the actual writing of fiction, the May Fourth writers' pursuit of 'avant-garde' made it impossible to achieve real 'commonisation' (*pingminhua*). When compared to the new novelists, who continued to use the well-liked chapter form, the May Fourth writers were clearly in pursuit of a different kind of high, 'elitist' literature. Elitist, at least, when measured against the level of education and the taste of the majority of people at the time. As I have pointed out elsewhere, May Fourth writers' narration, for example, mainly relied on models from literati literature (*wenren wenxue*), not folk literature. Their narration was to some extent 'separated from the masses' and highlighted the *Shijing* and *Lisao* tradition, which embodies the taste of the literati. Only in this way were they able to break through the boundaries of traditional modes of narration.⁹

Compared to the May Fourth writers' aim to completely 'remould' fiction, the late-Qing new novelists' partial acceptance of Western fiction (its thought and its techniques), while striving to preserve the narrative framework of chapter fiction, comes across as very conservative and outdated. The choice to preserve the chapter format and the decision how to view traditional Chinese fiction depend to a large extent on the authors' own knowledge structure and their perception of their own readership. In the late-Qing period, there were many translators of foreign fiction who adapted their original works to what they called 'the Chinese novel system' (*Zhongguo shuobu tizhi*), sometimes even feeling that 'the insertion of divisions and breaks is superior to the original' (Chen and Xia 1989: 47). However, the differences in structure between Chinese and Western fiction were gradually better understood by writers and readers alike. During the 1920s and 1930s, any writer using the chapter form must have made a conscious choice. When Mao Dun evaluated 'modern chapter form fiction', he said that its thought was 'utterly worthless', that artistically speaking it was only capable of narration, not of description and that therefore 'these things are not worthy to be called fiction.' When held against the yardstick of naturalism, 'which has undergone the baptism of modern science', the chapter fiction writers, who were ignorant of 'completely objective and cold-blooded observation' naturally seemed to be lagging

behind. But was it fair to say, like Mao Dun did, that all Western fiction 'was unmarred by subjective psychology'? On the other hand, Mao Dun was right about one thing: that those who persisted to write in chapter form during the Republican era were 'generally incapable of reading Western fiction in the original' (Rui *et al.* 1984: 756). Having monopolised the right to explain Western fiction, the advocates of new literature were able to operate boldly and assuredly. As for the chapter fiction writers, labelled 'the old school' (*jiupai*), they could only attempt to parry the blows, but they could never strike back. What is most surprising when one reads the debates between old and new novelists of this period, is not the latter's overbearing attitude or the former's gradual retreat, but it is the self-peripheralisation of the chapter novelists. Except for some occasional abusive language, all else is self-mockery and self-justification.¹⁰ Li Dingyi retreated from the literary scene after finding a steady job, Bao Tianxiao tried to clear himself of the stigma of 'mandarin ducks and butterflies writer', while Zhang Henshui (1994: 9) confessed to being 'Saturday School offspring' (*libai liu pai de peizi*). All of them time and again demonstrated their lack of confidence, in stark opposition with the sense of pride and purpose of the new literature adepts.

What the May Fourth advocates of new literature called 'old-school fiction' was nothing else than the continuation of late-Qing new fiction. That the once so innovative new fiction ended up being ridiculed as old-school fiction is not just a matter of generational change, but a manifestation of the way in which cultural trends as a whole shifted from 'reform' to 'revolution'. Aided by the craze for Westernisation, the May Fourth literary revolution was tremendously successful. Those who had hoped to retain more of the traditional Chinese narrative methods were left with no other option than to retreat to the periphery of the literary scene. Described in this manner, the 'old school fiction' appears to be only on the losing end of a 'battle between East and West'. In fact, a more important factor is probably the 'debate between high and low'.

As I mentioned above, the slogan 'common people's literature', which was the most sonorous of the May Fourth slogans, was mainly used by Chen Duxiu, Zhou Zuoren and others as a means to import Western learning and criticise tradition. It cannot lay claim to any real identification with 'common' literary tastes. If we try to apply the long-standing, yet hard-to-define division between 'high' and 'low' literature, the fiction works by people like Lu Xun and Yu Dafu unmistakably belong to high literature (or literati literature). In

general, May Fourth fiction often draws inspiration from classical poetry and prose.¹¹ On the other hand, certainly not all traditional Chinese chapter novels live up to the definition of 'popular fiction'. When people like Zhou Zuoren and Lu Xun consider *Red Chamber Dream* and *The Scholars* as exceptions, or special cases, in their discussions of traditional Chinese popular fiction, they might have been implicitly making the argument that chapter fiction, too, has a high form and a low form.

To the mind of orthodox literati from the Ming and Qing dynasties, chapter fiction, when compared to their elegant prose and poetry writings (*shiwén*), could be nothing but popular literature. In fact, however, owing to the intervention of large numbers of first-rate literati, some chapter novels had already clearly transformed from low to high. The efforts of Wu Jingzi and Cao Xueqin and the achievements of *The Scholars* and *Red Chamber Dream* constitute the best possible example. These works' emotional sincerity, sustained profundity, stylistic brilliancy and structural perfection, their tendency to employ the written language and reflect literati concerns all make them very different from earlier popular narratives (*minjian xushi*), which were much closer to the oral story-telling tradition. Statements made by these authors regarding the energy they invested into correcting and revising their texts ('proof-read ten times, five times revised' or 'pages filled with nonsense, eyes filled with bitter tears') make it especially clear that their aim in writing was not to target a profit. In the fiction revolution of the late Qing, one can still faintly distinguish two different trends: professional writers follow their readers' tastes, while literati-politicians attempt to reform the function of fiction. Fiction written by Liang Qichao and others is not very accomplished, but because it stresses the expression of own ideas and feelings and de-emphasises readability and entertainment, it bears distinct similarities to existing traditions of literati narration (*wenren xushi*). It was this 'serious' aim of writing that led Zhu Ziqing to acknowledge that these writings 'can be traced to the same origin as the new literature movement.' (Zhu Ziqing 1947: 6)

When the new literature adepts criticised 'old-school fiction', they objected to its moralism and didacticism, as well as to its frivolousness and entertainment. In reality, they mainly opposed the latter. Deriding their opponents as 'beggars of letters' (*wengai*) or 'literary prostitutes' (*wenchang*), they were clearly not referring to the moralising aspects of their work.¹² The emergence of professional writers such as Li Boyuan and Wu Jianren was more closely related to

the development of a market for literature than that of people like Feng Menglong and Li Yulai had been during the Ming and Qing. However, this did not necessarily inhibit the deployment of their talent and the fact that they 'wrote books to make a livelihood' should not have been a reason to disregard them altogether. From the 1920s onwards, the most concerted and most serious criticism levied against the old fiction school was the charge of 'money worship' (*baijin zhuyi*). Although this is not the place to go into the artistic merits of *Amazing Valiants From All Corners of the Country* or *Fate in Tears and Laughter*, I would like to point out one thing: that the New Culture people's contempt for professionalised writing has distinct 'elitist' characteristics. The reason why the 'amateur' (*ai mei di*) May Fourth writers were so scornful of 'money worship' was not just their loyalty to the literary cause, but also their relatively elevated social status. This leads us to the cultural character (*wenhua pingge*) of the two major cities of the 1910s and 1920s, Beijing and Shanghai, and to the different functions of the new schools and journal publishers, both also products of modernisation.

The cultural character of schools and journals

In 1899, when Liang Qichao published his 'Yinbing shi ziyou shu' (Liberal Writing from the Ice-Drinker's Studio), he declared that 'there are three ways of spreading civilisation: through schools, through newspapers and through lectures.' This eloquent expression soon became a petphrase of many new scholars. Yet the three elements mentioned are not entirely equal, since 'lectures' can be held at schools and published in newspapers. In terms of the beliefs and aspirations of the new scholars, schools and journals represented the larger attraction. Both schools and journals have in fact been two major motive forces in the process of China's early modernisation (*jindaihua*).

It is generally accepted that the mass media (including the publishing industry), with journals as their main representative, played a decisive role in the fiction revolution advocated and instigated by Liang Qichao *cum suis*. The new schools, which differed from the traditional system of education in that they had a background in Western culture, were naturally ideal places to foster readers and potential writers of new fiction. This is not to say that all intelligent and gifted people of the time who were capable of reading and enjoying new fiction had all obtained a school education. It were

rather statements by the authors, to the effect that those with no knowledge of natural science, political science, biology and law enforcement 'cannot read my new fiction' (Chen and Xia 1989: 277–8), which virtually dictated that only people with a new-style education could be certified readers of new fiction. If journal publishers provided new fiction with a publication 'front' (*zhendi*), it were the schools that provided the creation of new fiction with its reserve units (*houbei rencai*). The two complemented each other and relied on each other. Without the former, new fiction would not have spread so rapidly, while without the latter, its developments would have lacked a motive force and sense of direction.

Although schools and journals are both important products of China's early modernisation, they actually performed vastly different functions. During a few exceptional periods (for instance shortly before the 1911 revolution) and due to a common cause (overthrowing the Qing) many 'progressive' schools and journals worked in close concert and agreement. However, except for the political party organs, which need not worry about costs, most journals had to rely on their own activities to make a profit and sustain development. In other words, even though journal publishing itself possesses a strong cultural flavour, it is at the same time also a commercial enterprise. Schools were different, partly because of the traditional Chinese respect for learning, which borders on the superstitious and easily allows for schools to be 'consecrated' (*shenshenghua*), but even more because teacher and students alike tended to keep their distance from 'filthy lucre' (*tongchou*) and did not directly get involved with commercial activities. As a result, those involved in journal publishing displayed more of a metropolitan attitude, while school teachers and students basically inherited the sense of superiority and responsibility of the traditional scholar gentry. This is not to say that there have not been any historical individuals who managed to shuttle back and forth between the two realms, but the basic character of these two cultural entities is not determined by individual ethical sentiments or aesthetic sensibilities.

After the 1911 revolution, the earlier 'concert and agreement' ceased to exist and a split became apparent between the two tools of spreading civilisation, the schools and the journals. As the journal publishers rapidly became more worldly in their search for commercial profits, schools to some extent preserved their 'ivory towers' and retained their cutting edge in social criticism. This fact can explain the difference in cultural character between Beijing and

Shanghai during the 1910s and 1920s. It is after all quite surprising that the May Fourth New Culture Movement did not emerge in Shanghai, even though that city was influenced by Western culture at an early stage and was the most cosmopolitan city in China at the time. As the political centre, Beijing could of course fairly easily attract talented new scholars and produce cultural trends, even if the city was not as Westernised as Shanghai. However, this framework of interpretation, which limits itself to the opposition between a political centre and a commercial centre, still leaves much to be desired. Perhaps a focus on the different roles of schools and journals in the advancement of New Culture can provide some additional insights.

Throughout the late Qing and early Republican periods, Shanghai's position as the centre of the newspaper and publishing business was never challenged. It also had many prominent institutions of primary, secondary and vocational education. However, when it came to university education, which exerted a tremendous influence on cultural and academic development, Shanghai continued to lag behind Beijing. At the time of the May Fourth New Culture Movement, the commanding authority of National Beijing University was particularly impressive, but under its wings, institutions like Beijing Higher Teachers' College, Beijing Women's Higher Teachers' College, China University, Chaoyang University, Republican University and the Université Franco-Chinoise (*Zhongfa daxue*) also played important roles. In the Shanghai of 1919, later so-famous schools such as Jiaotong University and Fudan University had not yet been established, while mission universities were even less able to play a major role in the partly anti-imperialist new culture movement. Although the movement to withdraw the mission's education rights did not erupt until the early 1920s, its seeds had already been sown. Their emphasis on separating religion and education and their concern for cultural aggression ('what feels like an act of benevolence, leaves traces of colonisation'), made intellectual circles very wary of mission universities.¹³ Furthermore, the 'strict management' of the mission schools, the weak 'response to new thought trends' of its students and their failure to be 'misguided by new words like "freedom" and "equality"' (cf. Li Chucai 1987), kept them from playing a leading role in modern China's thought revolution and political strife.

As the fuse of the May Fourth New Culture Movement and one of its main constituent elements, the literary revolution also relied on Western-style higher education. The social status and accumulated

knowledge of university professors such as Chen Duxiu, Hu Shi, Qian Xuantong, Liu Bannong and Zhou Zuoren was far out of reach for the Shanghai journalists. Moreover, they need not write books to make a livelihood, no doubt to the envy of the majority of professional writers in Shanghai. Many of the journals that advocated New Culture in those years were ran by university professors with their own money and neither editors nor contributors were remunerated. This kind of idealistic cultural pursuit was naturally at odds with that pillar of modern publishing, the contribution fee system (*gaofei zhidu*). Deriding the 'beggars of letters' and 'literary prostitutes' and disdaining 'money worship' writing relied on having the lofty and aloof universities as one's intellectual background and spiritual home. Although opening a university requires fund-raising and running a university involves power struggles, there was no need for individual professors or students to become directly aware of such worldly concerns. On the surface, at least, university campuses seemed much more 'noble' and 'pure' than the 'down-to-earth' newspaper and publishing business.

The sense of responsibility and idealistic feelings of university students and professors have constantly been an important motive force in the process of China's modernisation. On the level of actual fiction writing, there is no exception. Of the 12 founders of the Literary Association (*wenxue yanjiu hui*), ten were university students and professors. The remaining two were Jiang Baili, who used to be director of the Baoding Military Academy, and Shen Yanbing (Mao Dun), who had passed through the Beijing University pre-entry programme. As for the Creation Society (*Chuangzao she*), it consisted almost uniformly of returned students from Japan. The writers and readers of new fiction were mainly concentrated in schools, while 'old school fiction' had come to rely on city dwellers for its readership. Throughout the 1920s and after, this situation basically remained the same. Students who had left campus were sometimes able to transform the style of certain journals (as in the case of Shen Yanbing, Zheng Zhenduo, and *Xiaoshuo yuebao* (*The Short Story Monthly*)) and publishing houses eager to keep up with new trends would seek the advice of famous professors (as in the case of the Commercial Press and Hu Shi). This kind of dialogue and communication would assuage the contradictions between schools and journals to some extent. However, the new schools' penchant for idealism and the journal publishing houses' tendency towards worldliness continued to determine the two sides' different demands on fiction.

The new fiction established during the late Qing period, given the fact that its writers were professionals, that its form was journal serialisation and that its implied readers were city dwellers, almost inevitably ended up as the 'popular fiction' of the Republican era. If popular novels by Zhang Henshui and others sold very well and were widely read, why did they never have as much influence as the highly experimental May Fourth new literature? The answer lies not only in literary standards, but also in 'reader commitment'. The implied readers of new literature were students. Combining relative poverty with a thirst for knowledge, their reception of fiction went far beyond recreation and entertainment. Even if schools did not use fiction as teaching material, the large circulation of fiction among students ensured that fiction works often played the role of textbooks. Additional factors were the mobility of students and the possibility that they, in turn, would later become teachers, causing an accumulative increase in the reading and spreading of fiction. In terms of actual effect, as far as the reading of fiction was concerned, one student matched at least ten city dwellers. Therefore it is not sufficient to judge the spread and reception of fiction solely on the basis of sales figures.

For the university professors of the May Fourth period, apart from the relative superiority of their social status and ready knowledge, there was another element that favoured their involvement in literary creation, namely the possibility to use their own classroom lectures and textbooks to accelerate the spread of their work. Lectures on fiction held at Beijing University by Hu Shi, Liu Bannong and Zhou Zuoren gave a big push to the development of new literature. Books like Hu Shi's *Wushi nian lai Zhongguo zhi wenxue* (*Chinese Literature of the Past Fifty Years*) and Zhou Zuoren's *Zhongguo xin wenxue de yuanliu* (*The Origin and Development of China's New Literature*) even more clearly use the writing of history as a pretext to promote their own literary proposals. In 1929, Zhu Ziqing even started to teach a comprehensive course on 'Chinese new literature studies'. Although he was pressured into discontinuing the course after four years, not many literary movements will have been so fortunate as to enter literary histories and university classrooms while they were still in their starting phase.

The compilation of textbooks for primary and secondary education illustrates the exceptional fortune of the May Fourth new literature movement even better. In January 1920, the Ministry of Education issued a decree that in every province 'from this autumn onwards, all

national schools are to use the national language as the language of writing in the first two forms, in order to achieve the uniformity of the spoken and written word.¹⁴ This was of course a crucial step for the success of the *baihua* movement. The extreme urgency with which new textbooks needed to be written further secured the quick canonisation of new literature. Two ready examples are *Zhongxue guoyuwen duben* (*A National Language Reader for Secondary Schools*), published in 1924 by Shijie shuju, and the series *Guowen baiba ke* (*The National Language in 108 Lessons*), which the Kaiming shudian started to bring out in 1935. The former contains four stories and five essays by Lu Xun, which was already quite farsighted at the time. But that it included work from fiction and poetry collections by Ye Shengtao and Guo Moruo that had been published only a year before is almost unbelievable. The latter was co-edited by Xia Mianzun and Ye Shengtao. The four volumes that were published contained 144 texts, of which three out of five were in *baihua* and by new literature writers. New literature found its way smoothly into secondary school textbooks. For popular fiction writers, like Zhang Henshui, no matter how popular they were, there was no such luck.

The twentieth century is the most suitable period for describing the development of Chinese literature on the basis of the opposition between popular literature and literati literature. The distinction and opposition between the two was never as clear before and is not likely to be as clear again. That popular fiction has been relegated to the remotest little corner of the historiography of twentieth-century Chinese literature is another 'miracle'. Even in the 1930s and 1940s, when popular fiction was all the rage, people like Zhang Henshui clearly suffered from an inferiority complex and they were constantly ready to 'call the final verdict' on 'chapter novelists' and 'the mandarin ducks and butterfly school' (cf. Zhang Henshui 1944). From the 1950s onwards, following the ideological principles outlined in Mao Zedong's 'Xin minzhu zhuyi lun' ('On New Democracy'), the field of modern Chinese literature studies was established on the basis of the Lu-Guo-Mao-Ba-Lao-Cao¹⁵ framework of narration and standards of appreciation, resulting in the total dismissal of the 'old school fiction' from the Republican era.

Fin-de-siècle challenge

May Fourth new literature was built on resistance against 'popular fiction'. The deliberate exclusion of the 'beggars of letters' by people

like Mao Dun and Zheng Zhenduo, surely has its own historical rationale. The founders of the field of study called 'modern Chinese literature', however, exaggerated the victory of May Fourth new literature by deliberately ignoring dissimilar types of writing, such as writing in classical Chinese, regulated poetry and popular fiction. For the past ten years, scholars have been constantly questioning this situation. Even though the teaching outline determined by the State Education Committee still holds on to the old standards, it seems to me that a breakthrough has been made in the universities, where this century's popular fiction is finally no longer avoided.

Scholars' admission of popular fiction and their re-evaluation of the May Fourth viewpoints seems to be a faint echo of the rapid re-emergence of popular literature in the 1990s. In fact, however, they are two very different phenomena. The former is limited to introspection by the academic community, whereas the latter actively operates within the mass media. The former is still deliberating and painfully unsure what its next move should be, whereas the latter is already completely at ease with the new situation.

In the 1990s, stirred by the commodity economy, encouraged by the government, and incited by postmodern theory, mainland China's popular literature is in absolute control. Virtually all the 'literary incidents' that attract people's attention are closely related to it. In contrast, the once so glorious 'élite consciousness' and 'literati literature' are either objects of ridicule or self-conscious outsiders. Attempts to re-introduce slogans such as 'the spirit of the humanities' or 'resist capitulation' are surely capable of lending courage to those who are in the dark, but they could easily drive the whole problem back to where it started: the opposition between high and low.

The contemporary tendency towards worldliness, the dominance of popular literature and the entry of Jin Yong into universities and literary histories: these are some of the smaller and larger problems that Chinese scholars at the end of the century must try to deal with.

(translated by Michel Hockx)

Notes

- 1 See for instance Chen and Xia 1989: 318.
- 2 When Beijing Normal University's Wang Yichuan and others published their *Anthology of Masters of Twentieth Century Chinese Literature*, they ranked Jin Yong as number four, after Lu Xun, Shen Congwen and Ba Jin, but before Lao She. Mao Dun was not ranked at all. This action

attracted media attention and was hotly debated for a while, with the newspapers publishing large numbers of incoherent contributions to the debate.

- 3 Quite a few critics were in fact using Jin Yong as a pretext to attack Beijing University school policies and the intellectual attitude of its professors. See Shao Yanjun 1995.
- 4 The argument that the university was in fact admitting the 'historian' and 'political commentator' Zha Liangyong (Jin Yong's real name), sounded even less convincing, even though its intentions to protect the university were very noble.
- 5 The first essay discussing the issue, written by Yan Lieshan and published in *Nanfang zhoumo*, 2 December 1994, was entitled 'Jujue Jin Yong' ('Reject Jin Yong'). It was followed by endless fights and arguments.
- 6 Bestowing an honorary professorship on Jin Yong was a decision of the university administration and had nothing to do with the professors of literature. Conversely, Beijing University scholars' discussions of martial-arts fiction and its main representative Jin Yong could take place in the classrooms in all openness, without intervening in any way in university administration.
- 7 Cf. Chen Duxiu 1917, Hu Shi 1917 and Zhongmi [Zhou Zuoren] 1919.
- 8 See the items 'Lishi xiaoshuo' ('Historical Fiction'), 'Shuihu' ('Water Margin') and 'Shuihu yu Honglou' ('Water Margin and Red Chamber Dream') in Zhou Zuoren 1988.
- 9 Cf. Chen 1988: Chapter 8.
- 10 Cf. Wei Shaochang 1980: 1 and Rui Heshi *et al.* 1984: 1.
- 11 Cf. Chen 1988: Chapter 5.
- 12 Cf. articles by Zheng Zhenduo [Xidi] in Rui *et al.* 1984.
- 13 Cf. Li Chucai 1987 and Zhu Youxian 1993: 4.
- 14 Cf. *Jiaoyu zazhi* (*The Education Journal*) 12: 2 (1920).
- 15 [translator's note] Lu Xun, Guo Moruo, Mao Dun, Ba Jin, Lao She, Cao Yu.

Stories and Legends

China's largest contemporary popular literature journals

Marja Kaikkonen

Introduction¹

During the 1980s, popular literature reappeared in mainland China as an important economic and cultural factor. The more liberal cultural policies made it possible to import cultural products from abroad; the economic reforms introduced elements of market economy even into the cultural sphere and thereby made again relevant the question 'how many people will like this?', which had been illogical and incorrect during the time when the state actually paid people for consuming the cultural products that the state had made available. Another reason was the breach in popular cultural tradition created by the Cultural Revolution, which alienated the growing generation from all the well-known and familiar products and forms of traditional popular culture and made young people welcome different, modern entertainment.

The craze for popular literature started with a revival of historical storytelling and reprinting of traditional popular works of historical and adventurous character.² The next step was the introduction of many Hong Kong, Taiwan and foreign popular novels. Primary among these were Jin Yong's martial-arts novels from Hong Kong and Qiong Yao's love stories from Taiwan. These two authors are still the best known in their respective genres.

The most important form of publication of indigenous popular literature came to be journals, which were founded by the dozen, often serialising works that were later published as books. In the mid-1980s there were over 200 popular journals; fewer now as a result of

repeated government campaigns against 'pornography' and 'bourgeois liberalism'.³ Other reasons for the diminishing number are harsh economic competition and cuts in subsidies within government units, combined with professional incompetence and a continuous lack of good works. Even general social trends, such as the utilitarian thinking caused by increasing competition, seem to diminish the fiction-reading public. In the mid-1990s, with more than 7,000 periodicals and newspapers in China, there were only about 60 popular literature journals left.⁴

The two journals that this paper presents are quite different in several respects, but they have in common that they are the largest of their kind, and therefore worth extra attention. My starting point is that their contents can tell us something about what numerous ordinary people – non-intellectuals – are thinking about today. To judge how representative the two journals are, we need some knowledge of their editorial methods.

For a Chinese reader, the titles of the journals are indicative of the contents: the terms *gushi* (story) and *chuanqi* (legend) reveal what to expect. *Gushihui* (*Story Session*) is a small journal of short and very short stories, whereas *Jin gu chuanqi* (*Legends Old and New*) publishes mainly short and middle-length novels. The term *gushi* is currently associated with casual oral storytelling, and although the contents of *Gushihui* are neither necessarily funny nor specifically meant to be presented orally, the pieces do employ a terseness reminiscent of more elaborate jokes. *Chuanqi* is a term with a complicated literary history, but its contemporary connotation is that of a piece of narrative fiction with adventurous or fantastic contents. Many people would associate the term with historical themes, therefore the word *jin* in the title is relevant and makes it possible to include pieces on contemporary topics.

Stories in *Gushihui* are basically useful. They are either didactic, as folk stories and Chinese legends often are, or informative, which applies to the more modern stories. This makes them resemble literary works during the Cultural Revolution – they, also, were an important channel of information about contemporary society during a time when other information channels did not function. (This, again, made the literary works of that time assume a task which certain genres of folklore and popular culture had always had, which in turn may explain why at least many young people did read the literature of that time.) Stories for self-improvers can also be found in columns such as 'Chuan shi mingpian gushi' ('Stories from famous

works of ancient times'), and 'Waiguo wenxue gushi jianshang' ('Foreign literature story appreciation'), which summarise the plots of literary works into *gushi* form.

The editors of *Gushihui* do not admit to following any particular policy in their choices today, but this may be a recent development. The stories are quite constructive all along, and they take up topical social themes. Reading *Gushihui* since the 1970s reminds one very clearly of how many things have radically changed in China during the past 20 years. Many stories up to at least 1985 feel very conservative and leftist today, and still bear strong resemblance to Cultural Revolution works. In others it is obvious that the writers have been trained in *san tuchu*, the writing method officially promoted during the Cultural Revolution, which stresses 'the three saliences' – positive personalities, heroic persons, and the central heroic figure.

In the early 1980s, many stories dealt with girls being too picky when choosing a husband, and sons being too greedy when expecting an inheritance. Others criticised young people who wore foreign clothes (*yeyu huaqiao*, 'spare-time overseas Chinese'), or civil servants who tried to escape the birth-control programme. The omnipotent party secretary at a suitable level still often appears to punish individuals who give bad service, abuse their children or harass their production brigade members.

Some stories of the late 1980s portray people who end up in impossible situations thanks to unenlightened authorities. The authorities are, however, never directly criticised, unless they can be represented by an individual who has obviously made mistakes. Other stories deal with superstition and show how harmful it is. One story tells of a Shanghai woman who kills a man by too much sex, just in order to get his money through a complicated fraud scheme involving bank functionaries. Sometimes the Maoist style and way of life have been left far behind! At the same time the stories clearly illustrate the extremely wide gap in the lifestyles and thinking among people in the cities and the countryside.

In the 1990s, more and more economic questions are dealt with in the stories, which is not very surprising. Successful private enterprise is praised. There are detective stories, or rather police stories, of rather poor quality, where the plot is revealed in one go at the end. Many stories tell of confidence tricks, swindles, and fraud, often contrasting city people and country people.

In 1994, one interesting column was called 'Wenti gushi' ('Problem stories'). It took up urgent social questions and moral dilemmas,

obviously in order to generate discussion on these topics. One story narrates how an old village head is persuaded to agree when a man whom the village head had sent to jail during the Cultural Revolution reappears at his poor home village, deals out money to every villager, and promises to give money for a longed-for village school, on condition that it will bear his name (Zhang Dong 1994).

Another story tells of two students who are in love. During a trip, they are suddenly separated by a flood. She, who is carrying all their food and money, is afraid that he will starve, and asks a passing farmer to row her over to him. But the farmer asks her to go to bed with him for the favour. Being a virgin, she refuses at first, but as the waters do not seem to go down, she, desperately worried, finally agrees. When she gets to her boyfriend and tells him what has happened, he refuses to have anything to do with her, takes all the money and leaves (Dong Cao 1994).

Yet another story focuses on the conflict between traditional 'jurisdiction', which may have didactic strength despite all its weaknesses, and modern law and its application, which are also imperfect. There is a family with three daughters and one son, Liu Si. Liu Si is a good-for-nothing who gambles away all the family's money and does harm everywhere. The father asks the police to take him in, but the police cannot do so, since there are laws . . . When Liu Si threatens his father with an axe to get money, the parents go to Liu Dali, the local security chief. Liu Dali wonders whether it would be best to get rid of the son altogether. The father is at first hesitant but finally agrees. When Liu Si threatens his parents again, Liu Dali appears with two militiamen. They bind Liu Si and arrange a meeting with the villagers, where all his crimes are revealed and written down, and he is forced to sign the paper. Then Liu Dali issues a death penalty for Liu Si, who is to be executed immediately. The villagers do not quite believe it, they think the idea is to scare Liu Si. But when Liu Dali starts leading Liu Si toward the execution ground, Liu Si finally realises that it is for real and begs for his life, to no avail. Villagers run to the village head and party secretary, but on the way they hear two shots. Two months later, Liu Si appears, alive. He brings plenty of food to his parents, as a good son should. Liu Si had passed out when he heard the two shots. He woke up in Liu Dali's house, and Liu Dali promised to take him to work in the county town, though if he did not behave himself, Liu Dali would really execute him (Shi Ke 1994).

That the readers of *Gushihui* would be made to ponder such questions through the reading of small stories that may appear quite

trivial, is very significant, and a good illustration of one of the functions of popular literature – making people better prepared to solve their problems by supplying them with other people's experience. The main idea of *Gushihui* is still to supply entertainment, and obviously a column like this was too heavy for the readers: it was discontinued in 1995.

The more entertaining stories may tell of a poor bachelor, who manages to make lots of money in a single day, and to get a bride without any effort of his own (Wei Yiguang 1994). Or about a young woman, Lili, whose turn it is to act as gate-keeper at a factory. While she is anxiously waiting for her colleague to arrive and share the responsibility, a drunk comes in. She gets very frightened, and when he puts his hand in his pocket to take out something, she cries for help. At that very moment, a woman hits the man on the head and knocks him out. That was Lili's colleague! They tie the man up and report to the police, who send militiamen. The man wakes and tries again to take something from his pocket, but he is hit with an electric baton and faints. A ladies' wallet is found in his pocket, and Lili realises that it is hers, and that the drunk had merely wished to return it. She is very ashamed. Afterwards the two women visit the man several times and take food to him. Lili stops being afraid all the time, as most people seem to be good after all! (Wen Min 1992)

Tendencies in the contents do not show as clearly in *Jin gu chuanqi* as in *Gushihui*, as there are very few pieces in each issue, and fewer issues each year. Here are two examples of stories on contemporary themes.

A young soldier plays a shooting game at a street stall, and, losing unexpectedly, realises that he has no money to pay with. He leaves his watch instead, and promises to come later with the money. Then he is called to the Vietnam front, and it's rainy, so neither the stallkeeper girl nor her father are there when he goes to pay. He has to leave for the front without his watch. At the front life is not easy; he is together with a few comrades in the jungle, fighting often. They live in a trench, and tell each other about their girlfriends and wives. This young man has neither, so he feels very sad and lonely. From the front he writes to his home post office and asks for his letter, explaining why he never showed up with his money, to be delivered to the stallkeeper girl. Unexpectedly, he gets a friendly letter from her, he writes back, she answers, and so on. These letters are the cause of great envy from his comrades-in-arms, who never receive any. They share them and learn them by heart. Gradually, all the

others confess that they have no girlfriends, that their partners left them as soon as they had to go to the front, or that they have very unhappy marriages. Some comrades are killed in a furious battle, others seriously injured. When the survivors leave the front, our young man, who has done a good job, is made a member of a report team that travels around the country telling a glorifying story about the fighting at the front. He is dissatisfied because he has to tell the story approved by his superiors, especially since his own experiences are very different. He also has a bad conscience for his dead and wounded comrades, as if they had suffered in his place. He hears one of his injured comrades on the radio telling his version of the crucial incidents, and he barely recognises the course of events. They both think that the reports should be more truthful. He wires the girl, telling her that his train will stop for 18 minutes at the station. When he arrives, her father is there, giving him back his watch and telling him that the girl had left for the USA even before his first letter came. But so as not to disappoint the young man, he had written the letters himself, intending but not managing to reveal the truth every time.⁵

In the other story, an old expatriate Chinese from Thailand comes to a Chinese city with his nephew. The nephew contacts the police and says that his uncle seems to fear for his life. A police officer goes to the hotel, and the old man confesses that he has earlier written to the police about a narcotics smuggling case, which was then cleared up. Now the man is afraid that the smuggling organisation, with which he has co-operated before, will kill him. The police officer says the police will help him, and that they will be moved to a better hotel the next day. Then the officer goes to have a nice dinner. Next morning the officer returns to the hotel, only to find that the man has actually been murdered. No clues can be found, and some of the younger policemen think that a foreign super-professional has done the job. The nephew refuses to leave before the culprit has been found, and accuses the police of not doing what they could to protect his uncle. Despite much effort, the case is not solved for some time. Finally the nephew leaves, having received a telegram saying that his uncle's house in Bangkok has been looted. The police officer in charge cannot forget the case. Later, the police chief finds in a Hongkong newspaper a piece of news on the murder, which reveals that the murderer was the nephew, who was working for the smuggling ring. The police analyse the case and conclude that they were totally fooled by the young nephew. They are sure he will

commit worse crimes after this, and start to collect material on him so they can catch him next time (Huang Jiagang 1995).

These stories are not typical popular literature. They are not gratifying: they do not have a happy ending and they do not lead to an expected result. This suggests that the readers of *Jin gu chuanqi* are indeed quite experienced as readers, and prefer more complicated solutions. Both stories are critical of some important Chinese institutions: the military and the police. The first is shown to be false and to be playing the game of propaganda regardless of facts and against the wishes and conscience of its own members and the second is clearly shown to be incompetent. This is significant, as the journal and these stories are certainly conceived of as something very constructive in Chinese society.

Gushihui

Gushihui was established in Shanghai as early as 1964 by Shanghai wenyi chubanshe (Shanghai Literature and Arts Publishing House). After a long stop during the Cultural Revolution, it was revived in January 1974 under the title *Geming Gushihui* (*Revolutionary Story Session*), which it retained until the end of 1978.⁶

The journal came out irregularly in 1974 and 1975, with altogether 12 issues. It was turned into a monthly in 1976–1977, and into a bimonthly in 1978–1983. Since 1984 it has been a monthly again. The size has always been 32mo, and the scope has varied from 110 pages in 1974 to 64 pages in 1987 and 1992.

Popularity started to rise in 1979, after the title was changed and the contents ‘enriched’. In 1986 the issue went up to 7,600,000 copies.⁷ The reason was that the Chinese postal department was going through an administrative reform, which encouraged the employees to engage in selling unusual amounts of printed matter, ‘not always through normal means’. Therefore the issue stayed at this extremely high level only for some six months, to stabilise at around 5,000,000 after some time.⁸ In the late 1980s, sales withered to around 3,000,000, where they remained until 1994. During 1995 there was a dramatic rise in sales and it is likely that in late 1995 the four million mark was passed again. The increase is a result of conscious marketing efforts through improved distribution. Very few journals of any kind in all China have attained such large sales.⁹

Since 1996 *Gushihui* is printed simultaneously in nine places: Shanghai, Jinan, Harbin, Luoyang, Xi’an, Chengdu, Wuhan, Fuzhou

and Urumqi. There are good reasons for dividing the job. One is distribution: the journal reaches the market sooner, which is important as the competition is very stiff, and there are a number *gushi*-type journals on the market.¹⁰

The distribution situation in China is complicated and now politicised. Originally, periodicals of all kinds were distributed exclusively by the post-office network, and books by the Xinhua bookstore wholesale network. During the 1980s it became apparent that the capacity of the state systems was not adequate, and some private enterprises were allowed to do some complementary distribution to bookstalls, etc.¹¹ Their work has continued very successfully, and various signs indicate that they are now about to topple the sluggish Xinhua wholesale system totally. For the post-office system, which is not dependent on distribution work, the situation is not alarming, although they have lost a large portion of their customers. Obviously state units have been encouraged to use the official networks, as the question of distribution is everywhere given attention that otherwise would seem undue. A journal ought to show its loyalty to the government by utilising the state networks. *Gushihui* is very proud of having its entire edition distributed by the post-office network, while many other journals confess that only a part of their edition is taken care of by the post office and the rest is distributed 'by the journal itself'. This matter is quite significant for the journals' country-wide professional-political status, image, and self-esteem. It naturally depends on the type of unit issuing the journal, and the unit's economy. In practice it is a way of subsidising government agencies, something which the rich *Gushihui* can afford whereas many smaller journals cannot. The pressure on them seems also to be quite weak, but they are aware of the significance of the choice. *Gushihui* no doubt takes pride in being loyal and useful to the government, whereas other journals can find support for their choice from the economic directives and the necessity to make profits.

On the other hand, using the post-office system for successful distribution is not uncomplicated, either. The reason why private distributors have done so well is naturally that the post-office system is inefficient and liable to disturbances. To encourage the post-office departments concerned to work harder, *Gushihui* arranges a yearly meeting for their representatives where the *Gushihui* sales results of these departments are publicised and the department with the largest sales increase is awarded a challenge cup. In their daily work, the post-office departments are urged to deliver the journal to the market

as soon as possible. If one department is sluggish, the neighbouring departments are then encouraged to sell the journal to its area, thus causing losses to the sluggish one. In this way competition is promoted among the departments.¹² The sad thing is of course that this is not done by the departments themselves but has to be initiated by *Gushihui*.

Gushihui's success is so well known that people want to share it: it has been illegally reprinted every month for four or five years. This is done in two ways: the original is reprinted as soon as it appears on the market, or alternatively some other matter is printed with the title *Gushihui*.¹³ The culprits are private booksellers somewhere, but, despite several investigations, nobody has been prosecuted yet. Instead, *Gushihui* tries to take advantage of them: wherever there is an illegal edition, there must be a market! A report on illegal *Gushihui* is therefore immediately followed up with a telephone call to the distributor, who is urged to step up sales efforts in the area and make the delivery ahead of time so that the illegal edition will come second.

Gushihui is today a real money-spinner for the publishing company. This is a result of a conscious development since the mid-1980s, when the journal earned no profit despite huge editions. In 1994, the profit was ten million yuan, possibly a record for any Chinese publication. With much work the same profit was expected to be made in 1995 as well, although it was difficult, since the international paper price had gone up a great deal during that year. Many other journals were going bankrupt for the same reason. *Gushihui* would have had a record profit in 1995 had it not been for the paper price.

The proportion of advertisements in *Gushihui* is very small: usually three colour pages (back cover, insides of front and back covers), and three black-and-white pages (in half-page instalments on text pages). Advertisements are 'very profitable', and bring two to three million yuan yearly. All advertisement space in 1996 was already booked in mid-September 1995. The proportion of advertisements cannot be raised, as readers react in a negative way.¹⁴ This seems to indicate that the prices of advertisements are too low, and perhaps the 'profit' is not a net figure at all. The advertisements in *Gushihui* are surprisingly old-fashioned; still in 1995 they deal mainly with mail-order miracle medicines and industrial machines. The type of advertisement in a publication naturally has to do with its printing and paper quality, and in this respect *Gushihui* is barely mediocre.

A problem is arising from the uneven economic development in China: should the journal be vigorously developed, the price would have to be raised (in 1995, the price was ¥1.40), which would displease people in the interior. But if the wishes of the people in the interior are followed, then coastal area sales will go down. Various possibilities of 'three-dimensional' publication are therefore being considered: there could be a basic journal, and then different supplements and even books could be attached to it for sales in various places.

Editors and Writers

In 1974, the new editorial staff comprised three or four young people in their twenties, whereas in 1995 it had grown to six or seven persons and two administrators. Compared with many other units, the editorial board appears still very youthful. The editors' salaries are in the upper-middle stratum of Shanghai salaries, that is, at least ¥2,000–3,000 a month.¹⁵ The *Gushihui* staff are very proud of their work, as they – fewer than ten persons – are creating the huge profit 'all by themselves'.

The editorial work at *Gushihui* follows the rule in all Chinese journals today, by using the so called *san shen* (triple examination) system. This means that everything that is published has to be read by editors at three levels: first by a regular editor, then usually by a vice editor-in-chief, and finally by the editor-in-chief. The amount of work that the editors at *Gushihui* do appears truly astonishing: *Gushihui* receives 10,000–20,000 manuscripts each month. Most of them are sent in by readers, that is, amateurs who may be farmers, workers, or, in many cases, cultural workers at local level. Half of the stories in *Gushihui* are written by such amateurs, the rest by persons whom the editors call 'authors'.

When the editors read a manuscript which appears interesting, they judge by the writing whether the writer is talented or educated enough to be able to revise the story himself (only about 20% of the published writers are women). If not, the editors make changes in the story so that it can be published. Both structural and linguistic changes are made. The former usually consist of cutting away much unnecessary text that weakens the story; sometimes important spots are further accentuated. The latter consists of improving the language: some writers (even master storytellers) are very talented in telling a story orally, but their language is not regular enough in writing. The editors have no time to rewrite stories, however, so their

processing has to be very streamlined. This means that a story must be very good to begin with to have a chance of being published. Amateur writers get paid almost as well as authors, and when a story is published, no mention is made of any editorial processing. However, since remuneration is according to length of story, writers frequently end up getting less than expected, as the manuscripts often need to be cut down to half the original length. If the writer appears educated and seems to some extent to master the *gushi* form, the editors ask him to improve the story himself. In this way they initiate a co-operation which hopefully results in the production of further stories for the journal. Here, *Gushihui* has gained another 'backbone' (*gugan*) author for their 'basic troupe' (*jiben duiwu*).¹⁶

Such co-operation with authors is a very important part of the work of all Chinese literary journals. To keep their authors active, *Gushihui* arranges a big annual *jiagonghui* (processing meeting), also called *bihui* (pen meeting).¹⁷ *Gushihui* has arranged such meetings for nearly ten years now. In recent years, several hundred thousand yuan have been spent annually on the arrangement. The meeting is organised in pleasant surroundings away from noisy cities, and lasts for a week or more. Forty to fifty authors are invited, together with the editors. The authors bring their manuscripts, which are read and discussed by the participants, after which the authors rewrite them so the editors can take them back ready for publication.

The number of backbone authors varies and they are by no means a fixed group. *Gushihui* claims to have fostered thousands of authors during the years, but as each of them only writes for some time, new authors need to be trained continuously. At any particular time there are a few hundred authors writing more or less regularly for *Gushihui*. They are naturally not professional writers, either. Quite a few are schoolteachers or local cultural workers of various kinds. The most 'professional' ones are local opera workers/writers, who are quite successful as *gushi* writers as well, since plays and *gushi* have many things in common. On the other hand, 'literary' writers, or writers of 'pure' literature, are not necessarily able to write *gushi* at all. There are also some workers and farmers among the backbone authors, but they are few, as the educational level of these groups is usually unsatisfactory.

Readers

Unlike many other journals, *Gushihui* has, surprisingly, never conducted a readership survey. However, according to the editors,

information on readership is continuously accumulated from various channels such as letters from and other contacts with readers, writers, salespeople and post offices. Formal statistics are lacking, but the editors claim to know that a third of the readers are schoolchildren, that male readers are in a majority, and that the readers have 'middle-level education', perhaps nine years of schooling (*chuzhong*). The ages, occupations, etc. of the readers are only surmised: 'they are of various kinds'.

No particular geographical area seems to be crucial for *Gushihui*, but most of the edition is sold in the better-off coastal provinces. Guangdong province alone has 600,000 buyers, Shanghai 170,000 and Beijing 100,000. On the other hand, *Gushihui* claims to be the most widely spread journal in China, which should be available even in the smallest towns. The proportion of subscribers has gone down from 60% in the 1980s and is now surprisingly small, only 30%. There are a number of reasons for this. While *Gushihui* is readily available everywhere, the recent drive for higher efficiency has resulted in a – hopefully temporary – problem: *Gushihui* has urged the distributors to bring the journal on the market as soon as they can. This means that while the official date of issue, when the subscribers receive the journal, is the fifth of each month, *Gushihui* may have been on the market already since the first. This discourages subscribers, of course. According to the editor, these problems would be dealt with. Another reason for the low proportion of subscribers is that so many people are moving these days, when many parts of China are practically being re-built. As no system for re-addressing a subscription exists or functions, people do not want to risk not receiving what they have paid for.¹⁸

Part of the success of *Gushihui* may be explained by the measures taken to activate its readers. Their opinion on the published stories is requested through a yearly contest, where the best pieces of the year are selected by reader votes and prizes awarded to their writers by a specialist committee.¹⁹ Through editorials and small notices in the journal, readers are continuously encouraged to submit their work. Almost every issue carries a small notice stating that 'column so-and-so welcomes manuscripts'. The above-mentioned contests started out as contests for writers who were to submit their 'best works'. The most promising writers were then invited to participate in the pen meetings, where their stories were processed for publication. To help more readers to become writers, *Gushihui* has published numerous articles explaining the methods of creation and collection of stories,

although the proportion of theoretical articles has never been large. In the late 1980s, a correspondence school for readers interested in learning to write *gushi* was established and attracted tens of thousands of paying participants. The *Gushihui* editors produced a textbook called *Gushi jiben lilun ji qi xiezuojijiao* (*Basic Theory and Technique of Story Writing*).²⁰ In 1994 a reader contact organisation was set up in the journal: 'Duzhe julebu' ('Readers' club').²¹ In September 1995 it had already 5,000 members, each paying a fee of 10 yuan a year. They are encouraged to send their stories to the journal, where they will be read, and good ones will be published, poor ones will be sent back with written comments. This is the point; usually *Gushihui* returns no manuscripts. Recently members have been asked for suggestions about what they would do if they were the editor-in-chief of *Gushihui*. This has already revealed that readers like the very short stories, and dislike the longer ones (in *Gushihui*, the longer ones are about 15 small pages). This is particularly interesting since the shortest stories are usually written by amateurs.²²

Another very popular column is 'Waiguo wenxue gushi jianshang' ('Foreign literature story appreciation'), where foreign literary works are summarised into *gushi* form, which readers find very enlightening. In 1987, a special column, 'Gushi jie long' ('Story relay'), was kept where an author had written the first half of a story and readers were asked to write the second half. In 1996, a column called 'Gushi chuandi' ('Story transfer') was started. Readers were asked to send the best stories they had heard, read, seen on film or TV or in any other media, Chinese or foreign, to this column. The best ones would be published. The editors expected no copyright problems, as the rules allowed summaries to be published and they were planning to indicate sources. A similar column, 'Quanguo youxiu gushi xuandeng' ('Selection of the Country's Best Stories'), was run successfully in the 1980s, but excluded foreign stories and did not advocate adapting stories from other media.²³

Contents

In 1995, each issue of *Gushihui* contained, on average, a dozen jokes and some 20 stories. Half of the stories were written by amateurs, the rest by the backbone authors. The home province of each writer is given. Only very few writers reappear. A few prolific backbone authors have had collections of their stories published by Shanghai wenyi chubanshe.²⁴

At least half of the stories are about modern life since 1949, and especially since 1978. The rest are historical stories, drawing mainly on ancient Chinese history but also on foreign history. The proportions of modern stories about cities and the countryside are equal, but there are even more stories on life in small towns. This probably reflects the editors' ideas of where the readers live.

There have been some changes in the contents since the late 1970s: in the early 1980s, there was a larger proportion of folk stories. Since the mid-1980s, the proportion of historical stories has been high, while folk stories have become fewer. There was a real folk-story fever in China shortly after the Cultural Revolution when folk stories had not been available; it has now long passed, and there is again a lack of folk stories on the book market. This is also reflected in *Gushihui*, from readers' wishes to editors' choices of stories. On the other hand, the proportion of stories on modern life has grown since the early 1980s. The number of stories portraying life in the countryside has gone down in the 1990s, while the proportion of stories on small-town life has grown significantly since the mid-1980s.

The ideal story for *Gushihui* is a 'tellable' story, one that can be told orally. Usually this means that it needs to be short, with only the most essential description. Even more important is to know where to be detailed and where not. Writing *gushi* requires special talent, which literary writers do not necessarily have, and which also literary editors usually lack. It is a question of being conscious of the oral requirements of storytelling, of mastering the rhythm, and avoiding the temptation of letting the writer's role take over, that is, adding too many unnecessary elements.²⁵

The editors of *Gushihui* are convinced that it is precisely this oral transmissibility in their stories that makes the journal so popular. They claim that their readers, the common people, do not see these stories as literary products created by a writer; rather, they are everybody's property; anyone can transmit them by telling them to new people; the better they are, the more people will share them. It is obvious that this is something quite different from European popular literature, which, after all, is a relatively literary thing. What we have here is a form of folklore, which still has a live connection with traditional folklore through the institutionalised storytellers that exist in numerous places in China and even contribute to *Gushihui*. Through this modern form of folklore, which is being created today, we can actually observe the techniques that make folklore.²⁶

Jin gu chuanqi

Jin gu chuanqi (*Legends Old and New*) is a journal very different from *Gushihui*. It publishes middle-length and short novels and short stories. *Jin gu chuanqi* was established in 1981 by the Wuhan branch of Zhongguo quyijia xiehui (The Association of Chinese Ballad Singers and Storytellers), but was taken over in 1984 by its superior unit, Hubeisheng Wenlian (Hubei Federation of Literary and Art Circles). The idea was first to supply storytellers with raw material, story skeletons which they could process. This ambition was given up quite soon, however, and real short stories or novels started being published.

Crucial to the journal's development was that in 1983 it happened to publish a serialised novel that became extremely popular: Nie Yunlan's *Yu Jiaolong* (Nie 1983).²⁷ It is a martial-arts love story about Yu Jiaolong, a Qing dynasty general's daughter fighting against horse thieves in Xinjiang. This was considered by many readers to be the first good-quality indigenous popular novel produced in China in the 1980s, and because of this success, *Jin gu chuanqi* was able to grow remarkably, to more than two and a half million copies, during the serialisation of the novel and its sequel, *Chunxueping*.²⁸ This obviously caused *Jin gu chuanqi* to raise its ambitions, too, and it started attracting more writers. However, the publishing figures sank as fast as they had risen, and since the late 1980s, the editions have gradually dropped to 200,000 copies in 1995.²⁹ The high figures of the 1980s are now explained by means of the term *nalaizhuyi*, the trend in reading habits of the time: people read whatever they happened to get hold of.³⁰

Jin gu chuanqi has always been a large journal, between 150 and 200 regular pages with few illustrations. The first two years it came out irregularly, from 1983 to 1986 as a quarterly, and was then turned into a bimonthly in 1987. The publisher is now considering monthly publication, but regular readers seem opposed to this idea. Publishing regulations also allow *Jin gu chuanqi* to publish *zengkan* (extra issues) now and then.³¹ This seems to be merely a way of making extra money.

Compared with *Gushihui*, *Jin gu chuanqi* is a very outgoing journal. Its economic success, i.e. capacity to generate profits, became well known in the whole country in the 1980s, and the journal has never made a secret of its publishing figures, profits, or, as in 1988, 1994 and 1995, losses. Detailed information on the journal's first ten years

is available in the commemorative volume *Jin gu chuanqi shi nian* (*Ten Years of Jin gu chuanqi*; 1991). Some of the editors frequently comment on developments in popular literature publishing through articles in the press³², and the journal has arranged or actively participated in conferences or meetings on popular literature every year.³³

Because the international price of paper more than doubled during 1995, *Jin gu chuanqi* was facing great difficulties. The editors felt that they could not disappoint their readers by making the journal thinner in the middle of the year. Subscription was to a journal of 192 pages, and a change would involve breach of contract. They would rather take a loss of 300,000 yuan. But important decisions had to be made about 1996: how much could the price be raised? Or could the number of pages be lowered? In that case the special quality of *Jin gu chuanqi* would be at stake: it was the only journal in China that published novels of up to 200,000 characters. Eventually, the price was raised by 50%.³⁴

Editors and Writers

There are about 18 staff members, most of them university graduates. Their average salary is around 700 yuan per month, but the differences are considerable; for example, the editor-in-chief earns between one and two thousand yuan.

Each editor is required to make two two-week trips every year, visiting the writers in a certain area, finding out how their work is progressing and whether they will be able to write anything for *Jin gu chuanqi*. Sometimes they practically wait for a writer to finish a manuscript so that no other journal will get it, a peculiar custom widely employed today and caused by the accelerating competition among journals. They also contact the local post-office representatives and other retailers and inquire about journal sales. With help from the post-office network, some of the journal's readers are called to a meeting, where their opinions on the journal can be expressed and where quality, contents, and other questions are discussed. From ensuing reports the editorial board can later consider the opinions when decisions are being made on changes in the journal.

There were originally many local cultural workers, especially *quyi* workers (ballad singers and storytellers), among the writers. As the trend has been toward better literary quality, the proportion of Zuo jia xiehui (Writers' Association) members among writers has grown.

Many need to adjust their writing somewhat to readers' preferences, stories with a distinct beginning and end, complicated plot, etc. On the other hand, the editors want the readers' level to be gradually raised through access to various kinds of novel, and therefore they sometimes ask writers of élite literature to write novels for the journal. These are usually very willing, as their original readership is dwindling. *Jin gu chuanqi* is consciously fostering a group of writers whose first pieces they published. Some famous writers have also been published in *Jin gu chuanqi*, such as Huang Zhiyuan from Shanghai, but fame is not a qualification in itself; suitability is decisive.³⁵

Jin gu chuanqi maintains contacts with several hundred writers all over the country. Surprisingly and quite unintentionally, a quarter of the published writers happen to live in Chongqing, and many others in Shanghai and Beijing. At *Jin gu chuanqi*, there is a certain interest in publishing works by minority nationality writers, obviously because the editor-in-chief is of a minority nationality (*tujia*) himself.

Dozens of manuscripts are received every month, while only two or three longer works and four or five short stories can be published every other month. The editors consider that the quality of manuscripts is going down; fewer and fewer manuscripts can be accepted without rewriting.

The writers are paid an average of 50 yuan per 1,000 characters; the best up to 70 yuan. This is not particularly much, but *Jin gu chuanqi* cannot afford more, 'as the journal is quite large.' Generally, literary journals pay their writers less than lifestyle magazines (*shenghuo kanwu*), which often pay 100 yuan per 1,000 characters. There is a continuous lack of good manuscripts in all journals, and good writers can pick and choose where they want to be published.³⁶

Just like all other journals, *Jin gu chuanqi* arranges pen meetings for its writers every year, whenever the economy allows. They are longer, up to one month, since the stories are longer as well, whereas the number of participants is naturally much smaller than for *Gushihui*.

Readers

Several reader surveys have been conducted at *Jin gu chuanqi*, but the results have not been publicised every time. The first survey was made in 1984, and its results seem largely to apply even today. However, a new detailed survey was conducted autumn 1995, and it was hoped that it would help the editors to answer some urgent questions about the journal's future direction.

The 1984 survey revealed that only about 10% of the readers (or perhaps survey participants?) were female, and that 29% of the readers were under 20 years of age, 36% between 21 and 40, and 35% over 40. About 40% were workers, 25% students, 13% teachers, 8% each cadres and military persons, and 7% farmers. That there were so few farmers is explained by the difficulties of transport and distribution. One easily gets the impression that the Chinese countryside in practice lacks postal services. Regarding educational level, about 6% had studied for 1–6 years (*xiaoxue*), 35% for 9 years (*chuzhong*), 25% about 12 years (*gaozhong*), 24% had studied in an occupational school (*zhongzhuan*), and 9% had college education or higher (*dazhuan*). Most people in the latter group were in scientific research or medical care, or were engineers or teachers (Meng Demin 1991). Later surveys have revealed that a majority of readers are not city-dwellers.³⁷ This is explained by the availability of modern forms of entertainment, which in the big cities has made people give up reading, especially the reading of longer literary works.

Jin gu chuanqi readers have always been concentrated in Central China, particularly Sichuan, Hubei and Shanghai, whereas few live in the most well-off parts in the South and Southeast. The readers remaining today appear unusually faithful. The proportion of subscribers is large, more than 50%. What is more, judging by the preliminary survey results, more than half of the subscribers have collected a whole set of *Jin gu chuanqi*. I was told of one reader who had had burglars in his home. Since he owned nothing of value, the thieves had taken his complete set of *Jin gu chuanqi*!³⁸

Contents

The number of contributions to each issue of *Jin gu chuanqi* varies; while it could be as many as ten in the 1980s, it is now decreasing and seems to have reached three to four in recent years. Instead of a number of short pieces, a *fukan* (supplement) was added in 1993. It contains jokes, witty rhymes from readers, letters to the editor and small stories of one to two pages. It is meant to work as a link between editors and readers. Serialised works are no longer published, since the readers do not like them – two months is too long to wait for the next instalment. This reflects the changed tempo of living in China.

The grown-up taste is illustrated by the fact that there are slightly more stories on historical topics than on contemporary. Also some stories on the Republican period and a few on war have been

published in *Jin gu chuanqi*, while they are very rare in *Gushihui*. In the early 1980s there were still some stories about new economic situations written in a very Maoist manner, and long fairy tales about the dragon king's underwater world, and so on, but these types are gradually disappearing. Curiously enough, some of Robert van Gulik's *Judge Dee* novels were published in *Jin gu chuanqi* in the 1980s.

There is general agreement among editors that young people prefer modern topics. Consequently, the editors feel a pressure to publish more stories on contemporary themes, and particularly *jishi wenxue* (documentary literature) to attract more readers. At the same time, the editors are very critical about *jishi wenxue*, which they feel is an impossible genre. A text should be either *jishi*, which is non-fiction, or *wenxue*, which is clearly fiction; as it is now, the works escape legitimate criticism from both sides.

Conclusion

The development of *Gushihui* and *Jin gu chuanqi* illustrates some of the cultural changes since the late 1970s. The journals themselves have changed somewhat according to their readership, which has gone through several phases and has not stabilised yet. The ways of marketing a journal have not been exhausted, either, so these keep influencing the readership. With so many factors changing, any attempt at interpreting the facts is risky, but let me try.

Both of these journals are quite conservative. They see themselves as making great contributions to Chinese society and cultural life in the form of profits, while offering a great number of individuals beneficial entertainment. As entertainment, however, they do not embody typical qualities of Western popular literature: they do not necessarily comfort the reader, nor supply the reader with fantasies into which to escape. On the contrary, some readers of *Jin gu chuanqi* have actually expressed their dislike of martial-arts stories, on the ground that they often lack concrete references in time and space. This implies that readers may not even like free fantasies. On the other hand, readers who do like them would turn to other publications – as many clearly have.

The more industrial type of popular literature, formulaic literature, is not being developed in the pages of these journals; the editors and apparently also the readers require more variety. This is true at least if we consider Western formulaic genres such as

romance, adventure or detective stories. On the other hand, I would view the didactic story as a Chinese formulaic genre above all others. In that case, both *Gushihui* and many stories in *Jin gu chuanqi*, particularly historical ones, clearly represent formulaic literature. The didactic story is of course a part of the tradition, and we can therefore state that Chinese popular literature as presented in these journals has not yet left behind this tradition. I say 'not yet', as there are indications that development is away from the didactic: the fact that young people dislike historical stories is one indication, suggesting secularisation of Confucian-communist-authoritarian values. The dwindling sales of *Jin gu chuanqi* may also be explained by this secularisation – grown-up readers now feel safe to be leaving these norms behind. On the other hand, the huge proportion of collector-subscribers can be taken to manifest that the remaining readers are people who have truly internalised the Confucian norm of loyalty. At the same time, the success of *Gushihui* may show the other side of the same phenomenon – in a time of rapid social change, parents want their teenagers to read normative literature, perhaps even more than if they themselves were able to supply the same norms. I think we can also assume that the traditional attitude to the written word as something automatically worthy of respect and therefore useful and therefore, for the common reader, necessarily didactic, is more likely to survive among groups with less schooling. This would show in the popularity of *Gushihui*, which corresponds to such expectations.

The two journals also exemplify the great male dominance in Chinese popular literature – among readers, writers and editors alike. *Jin gu chuanqi* used the characterisation 'love story' in the 1980s, but now seems to have given it up – people don't want to be caught reading such things. Nobody seems to be interested in producing popular literature for women. There is no consciousness of women having other needs or wishes than men, although everybody agrees that Qiong Yao's novels are read mainly by young women. On the other hand, there is perhaps no large market for novels on romantic young love. Young women seem to get early conditioning to a pragmatic, materialistic idea of marriage, while romance may be given a chance later in life in the form of extra-marital love affairs.³⁹ The success of the film *The Bridges of Madison County* supports this view.

The readers of *Jin gu chuanqi* seem to represent an average middle-class public in areas with a certain but not very high degree of modernisation. In certain respects the literature they read is

traditional: it is often didactic, and always stresses narrative elements and strong plots. While the latter is a conscious requirement from readers, the former is not so. In many ways, these works can be quite similar to average *élite* novels, but still this literature is disdained by much of the literary establishment. This can partly be explained by the fact that the Chinese government now sides with popular literature, thereby making many writers express their opposition to the government by opposing popular literature, which impedes a neutral evaluation of the position of popular literature on the present Chinese literary scene.

If much of the fiction labelled 'popular' is in fact quite similar to many products of 'serious' or '*élite*' literature, why then is it called 'popular'? A view of the present Chinese literary, or cultural, sphere from the 'other side', from beyond the gap between non-popular and popular, allows a new interpretation of what is actually happening here. Note that some of these issues are very sensitive, as we, students of China, are part of an establishment, and we have been almost totally dependent for our information on China on Chinese intellectuals – who comprise another establishment – and their interpretation of what Chinese culture contains. Both of these establishments have their legitimacy at stake. So there are controversial things in this model, but it seems that we do need to include a popular–nonpopular dimension in the interpretation of contemporary Chinese culture.

The dividing line between non-popular and popular appears very arbitrary, and seems to be drawn differently in China than in Europe. This leads to the question: what is the relationship of these two 'subfields', and can we observe any 'field dynamics'? At the moment, most Chinese intellectuals still look down upon popular literature as something unimportant, or in any case much less important than *élite* literature, although something that needs to be recognised because of its economic weight. This is true in the West as well, of course. But by studying *Jin gu chuanqi* I have come to believe that what is excluded from *élite* literature in China is a much wider section of literature than in the West.

The Chinese intellectuals' attitude is partly a reaction to the Chinese government's condemnation of the experimental ambitions of *élite* writers as unfortunate foreign influence, with its simultaneous praise of popular literary products for their capacity to create profits. This has led to *élite* writers, or at least avant-garde writers, for whom experimenting is most important, expressing their opposition to the

government by opposing popular literature. Since this seems to be a symptom of tension, we should take a closer look at it.

The great surge of popular culture and popular literature since the 1970s is a sign of the growing size and importance of a modern Chinese middle class.⁴⁰ This growth in itself can be seen as a threat to the position and importance of the intellectual *élite* in China. This *élite* has traditionally been a part of, co-operated with, and identified itself with the power holders, and has therefore been part of a ruling class or group. This would automatically make the intellectuals prefer to maintain the status quo, to conserve their position. They would have interests similar to those of the power holders, such as the wish not to change. Hence it is logical that the modernisation of Chinese culture would not be accomplished by the intellectual *élite*. Chinese traditional culture cherished values such as loyalty to the leaders of the country, whereas modern ideas or modern culture cultivate egalitarianism and individualism, which are quite the opposite. Traditional culture meant *élite* domination of culture, something which suited both communists and the intellectual *élite* of China very well. During the Maoist period, this *élite* continued to fight for its traditional position in the spirit of 'loyal opposition', which was, however, wasted on the communists although it aroused great sympathy from many individuals of traditional Confucian mentality. At the same time the communists worked in concrete ways to further weaken the power of intellectuals for the benefit of other, larger groups; that is what communist ideology is all about, of course. The egalitarian policies during the Mao era bereaved intellectuals of much of their economic, professional, or symbolic power or 'capital'. Instead, great efforts were made to vest symbolic power in communists. After Mao, we might have got the impression that this symbolic power was never established firmly enough to withstand any setbacks; but developments in Eastern Europe and Russia show that the question is obviously more complicated.

In the early 1980s, the rush for things traditional in cultural matters was, surely, not only a sign of the wish to compensate for what had been lost or inaccessible to the common citizen during the culturally impoverished years of the Cultural Revolution, but it was – consciously or unconsciously – an attempt by the intellectual elite to reintroduce to the cultural sphere a more traditional symbolic code, through which a more powerful position for this elite could be re-established. But it seems that many intellectuals had been fooled by appearances, and had actually neglected the changes in China at large.

I am convinced that China was far more modernised in 1949 than the communists ever wanted to admit. They adapted Chinese cultural life in accordance with a premodern rural ideal (already cherished by the May Fourth radicals), which was made to dominate in the cultural sphere. Even city dwellers were made to follow this ideal. This was done apparently to avoid what erroneously were thought to be Western cultural models, while in fact it was a question of universal cultural adaptations to material modernisation. It was also done in spite of the fact that a highly urban, modernised ideal à la Shanghai had prevailed among large groups of the population since long before 1949, apparently already since the late Qing dynasty. China was presented – to both the Chinese themselves and to foreigners – as a much less modern country than it actually was. True, it was not very modern in material terms, because of the wars, for example, but there was strong acceptance of modern development, of change.

Naturally, even the communists wanted to develop industry and agriculture in a modern way and, thanks to this ambition, the urban, modernised ideal did not totally disappear. But the modern ideal was invisible because it was a thing for the masses – accepted and acceptable for workers and even farmers, those groups that would gain most through modernisation. The modern ideal was realised specifically through material culture, and through popular culture, while the ‘visible’ cultural life defined by the establishment was still dominated by the intellectual elite. This inevitably reminds one of the nineteenth-century efforts to attain modernisation through the adoption of Western tools and the preservation of the Chinese spirit, a slogan that translates directly into modernisation of material (and popular) culture but preservation of the status of the intellectual élite, the guardian of Chineseness. The communist power holders had recruited the élite’s co-operation at least since the 1940s to carry out the rural ideal, and the élite had agreed, seeing in this a chance to conserve its own position. That proved mistaken or, at the most, temporary. Their co-operation with the communists was facilitated by the fact that they could continue to base their identity on the cultural differences between their group, the intellectuals, and other groups that threatened their cultural dominance, particularly the middle class where (mental) modernisation continued and whose culture – popular culture – the élite detested.

This paradox was confounded by the Cultural Revolution – or even earlier – when the communists betrayed the intellectuals co-

operating with them. Things were changed only by Deng Xiaoping's reforms, which produced a new economic order and gave the modernising class a chance to assert itself through mere numbers. Their numbers and their purchasing power suddenly made their culture, popular culture, visible to everybody in China. Popular culture since the 1970s has produced a renewed consciousness and cultural identity among this modern middle class, a process that is still going on as more and more people are included. An important part of this consciousness is the shared feeling of alienation and differentiation from the earlier *élite* or establishment culture, which also includes the communist cultural elements. In this light we can view the Dengist reforms as having resulted in some kind of 'democratic' normalisation of Chinese culture: more people are now able to choose, and more people are getting what they want. And not what the *élite* – intellectual or communist – think they should want.

From the point of view of the earlier intellectual *élite* as a group, what has happened is a catastrophe. They are the losers. They can no longer dominate cultural life, and middle-class culture lives a life of its own, neglecting the *élite*. The intellectuals are losing their position as a tool on which the power holders at least partially depend for defining and implementing the establishment culture. Instead the power holders, communists, have been quick enough to switch sides in an opportune way: facing unpopularity, they have started to redefine the group they want to co-operate with. They are naturally attracted to great numbers – and therefore they turn to popular culture. A case in point is the 'phenomenon' Wang Shuo, who dared to challenge the intellectual establishment and expressly refused to join it, writer as he was. Neglecting the intellectuals' disdain, he stuck to popular values and sentiments, became very famous and rich through 'middle-class', almost populist methods, and is now co-operating with the power holders and well on his way to setting up a new kind of cultural establishment with symbolic capital appreciated by the middle class and characterised by pop artists and modern media.

This development is in fact a sign of modernisation – or perhaps involuntary adaptation – even in the communist regime: in this way they seek legitimation from the most important group today: the middle class. This transition is by no means finished, and what we see now is the painful process where the intellectual *élite* is unwillingly adapting – or refusing to adapt – to their new powerless position, and

directing their frustration to their earlier confederates – the regime, and to their colleagues. The regime has let them down by denying them continued economic privileges – they find it difficult to publish, they are no longer given preferential treatment in the form of well-paid jobs or better housing, and their colleagues – other intellectuals – are deserting them by beginning to identify with the middle class and by accepting and contributing to popular culture. Their own cultural contribution is being marginalised, which can be seen in the diminishing editions of élite literary products, the well-known lack of readers, understanding, and sympathy, as well as in the increasing aggression or defensiveness expressed in, for example, cultural debate and caused by wavering identity and lack of meaning. At the same time, middle-class popular culture is following its own paths of development, supporting modernisation.

Obviously, it is not intellectuals of the establishment that are the main representatives of modernised culture in China, but people of the middle class, people within a different sub-field. Tensions between these groups and during changes in their spheres can hardly be avoided.

Notes

- 1 Much of the information in this paper was gathered through interviews with editors of popular literary journals and with scholars interested in popular culture in Beijing, Wuhan and Shanghai in September 1995. I want to thank Stockholm University, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, and SAREK for the arrangements and financial support which made the trip possible.
- 2 For a general introduction to the development of contemporary popular literature, see Kaikkonen 1994.
- 3 Letter from *jīn gu chuānqī* (*Legends Old and New*) vice editor-in-chief Luo Weiyang, 25 March 1995.
- 4 Figures quoted to me in September 1995 by several individuals, but their origin is unclear. The number of popular literary journals appears to be from 1993, in which case there ought to be many more today. On the other hand, any statistics on such matters are unreliable, as the quality – popular or not – of journals can fluctuate.
- 5 Fan Junchang 1989. This story is categorised as a ‘love story’.
- 6 *Story Session* is a rather literal translation of *Gushihui*. In the 1990s the journal has used two different English titles on its front cover, *Story Teller* in 1994 and *Story Selection* since 1995.
- 7 See Xiaocao song: *xian gei Gushihui chuāngkān sānshǐ zhōunian* 1994.
- 8 Interview with *Gushihui* editor-in-chief He Chengwei, Shanghai, 14 September 1995.

- 9 *Duzhe* (Reader), a Reader's Digest type journal, is nearing four million, and *Banyuetan* (Fortnightly Chat), which is a political news magazine, is up to four to five million, but only if its different editions are counted: it runs a *neibu* (select access) variant as a complement to the public version.
- 10 Some of them are specifically for children, such as *Gushi dawang* (Story King), others for grown-ups, such as *Gushijia* (Storyteller), *Gushilin* (Forest of Stories), *Gushi shijie* (World of Stories).
- 11 This soon also led to the development of an illegal distribution network for publications outside government control, both popular literary and political.
- 12 Interview with He Chengwei.
- 13 Small notices in the journal warn the readers of the forgeries, see e.g. *Gushihui* 1994:2, 36. This notice promises awards to readers who report on the retail sellers ('particularly government units'), distributors, or printers of the forgeries.
- 14 Interview with He Chengwei.
- 15 The entire Shanghai wenyi/wenhua/yinyue chubanshe is proud of having an average annual salary of 20,000 yuan.
- 16 Interview with He Chengwei.
- 17 This kind of meeting has been organised by Chinese literary journals at least since the 1950s. That the practice became more important in the 1980s appears natural, since the number of (popular) literary journals grew strongly at that time. This resulted in a shortage of publishable works, which made journals more keen on securing the co-operation of writers, which again could be achieved through such fringe benefits as these pen meetings.
- 18 Interview with He Chengwei.
- 19 See, for example the announcement in *Gushihui* 1994:1 inside cover. This contest, sponsored by a Shanghai electrical household appliances company, distributed 30,000 yuan as awards to writers and prizes to voters. Writer awards, in three classes of stories (middle-length, short, very short), ranged from 3,000 to 100 yuan, and reader-voters' prizes from 500 yuan to book packages. The names of the winners of the 1993 contest were published in *Gushihui* 1994:4, inside cover.
- 20 Edited by He Chengwei.
- 21 See the notice in *Gushihui* 1994:11, 96.
- 22 Interview with He Chengwei.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 They are: Wu Lun (1990?), Wu Wenchang (1991), who is an old master storyteller from Hangzhou known as *Jiangnan gushi dawang* (Jiangnan Story King), Huang Xuanlin (1993), who is vice-director of Shanghai gongren wenhuagong gushituan (Shanghai Workers' Cultural Palace Storytelling Troupe), and Cui Zhi (1993), who is an editor at Wenwu Publishing House.
- 25 Interview with He Chengwei.
- 26 There exists an elaborated theory of *gushi* and *gushi* writing/creation in China – the editors of *Gushihui* are specialists on it, and so are many folklore researchers in Chinese universities, e.g. Professor Wu Bing'an of Liaoning University, Professor Jiang Bin, vice chairman of the Chinese

- Popular Literature Research Association (*Zhongguo minjian wenxue yanjiuhui*) and Professor Qu Yude of Beijing University.
- 27 Later published by Zhongguo wenlian chubansongsi, turned into a TV-play by Chongqing TV Station, and made into a cartoon. See *Jin gu chuanqi shi nian* 1991: 365.
 - 28 In 1983, the largest single issue was 820,000 copies, in 1984 it was 1.2 million, and in 1985 2.73 million. See *Jin gu chuanqi shi nian* 1991: 373.
 - 29 Letter from vice editor-in-chief Luo Weiyang, 25 March 1995.
 - 30 Interview with editors of *Jin gu chuanqi* in Wuhan, 10 September 1995.
 - 31 The latest one was published in 1995 as Volume 94, with the subtitle *Xu Shiyong zhi mi* (*The Mystery of Xu Shiyong*), a biographical work by Kai Xuan (1995) on the celebrated military leader. Zengkan are not included in subscriptions, but are taken up in the total volume count.
 - 32 Apart from a number of literary works, both editor-in-chief Li Chuanfeng, and vice editor-in-chief Luo Weiyang have published a collection of articles, many of which deal with *Jin gu chuanqi* or popular literature. See Li Chuanfeng 1994 and Luo Weiyang 1992. The editors Meng Demin and Meng Yao also publish articles.
 - 33 See, for example '*Jin gu chuanqi shi nian jishi*' 1991.
 - 34 Interview with editors of *Jin gu chuanqi*.
 - 35 Ibid.
 - 36 Ibid.
 - 37 Letter from vice editor-in-chief Luo Weiyang, 25 March 1995.
 - 38 Interview with editors of *Jin gu chuanqi*.
 - 39 This is supported by surveys that show a surprising tolerance of extra-marital love. See, for example Li Hongwei 1995.
 - 40 The choice of this term is a compromise. What I mean is the large and growing group of people who through modernisation – in practice the reforms – have gained a lot. It seems to me that this group of people is characterised by representing those neither at the very top nor at the very bottom of society. Those at the top, who certainly have gained by the reforms as well, are much more influential, through connections to power holders or through financial power, while those at the bottom have gained nothing. This is a time of social transition, and therefore these groups have not clearly crystallised. The transition is from the Maoist society, where classes were politically defined – those politically accepted, those tolerated, and those suppressed, into a modernised society, where classes will be defined in a different way – perhaps in economic terms, at least partially, but possibly also through identification/lack of identification with a modernised world.

No past to long for?

A sociology of Chinese writers in exile*

Oliver Krämer

I don't even know if I am from anywhere anymore. Time goes by and I pass. How will this end? I have lost all my expectations. Resignation is not possible, my dear friends. Why? Because I always think of you (all of you, Spain) without any possible happiness ever again.¹

Juan Ramón Jiménez, winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature and one of the most influential figures in modern Spanish poetry, was born in 1881 in Moguer, Spain. Still a teenager, he joined the literary circle in Madrid, but ill health as well as his narcissism and self-indulgence, his reluctance to be published, and his uncompromising commitment to his poetry put him in the role of an outsider.

He left Spain in 1936, at the beginning of the Civil War. As 'ambassador of good will' (Naharro-Calderón 1988: 35), he gave his complete support to the Republican cause, in the United States, Puerto Rico and Cuba. After the war he joined a group of intellectuals who remained in exile throughout the Franco dictatorship. He refused any improvement of his condition as long as there were no free elections in Spain and remained in exile until his death in 1958.

The work of the 'pale aesthete and sickly recluse' (Brown 1972: 76) shows his sentimentality, melancholy and obsession with death.

*I am indebted to Bonnie S. McDougall for her suggestions as well as for the ideas she provided – or challenged. For further ideas and encouragement, I wish to thank Maghiel van Crevel and Michel Hockx.

Although critics have pointed out his pre-exile alienation, Naharro-Calderón shows that one can see in his later works sufferings typical for an exile and defines three problems: alienation from his country; alienation from his work (aggravated by the ransacking of his family home in Spain by Falangist troops, who confiscated his manuscripts and published works); and difficulties in dissemination of his work.

Jiménez' correspondence with his wife and with friends shows an incurable nostalgia, from which he suffered in particular in his first years of exile. His sadness was compounded by the news which reached him from Spain: the Republican side was losing the Civil War, and close friends and relatives who had remained in Spain were suffering from illness, some were dying.

After Tiananmen

Since the June 4th Massacre a number of Chinese exiles has come to feature more prominently in both the media² and sinological studies. Among them are the exile writers, a group which is largely composed of intellectuals who knew each other before leaving China. These writers are mainly grouped together by their contributions to the exile literary magazine *Jintian (Today)*.

They do not, however, constitute a very homogenous group: most conspicuously, not all of them left China in the aftermath of the June 4th massacre. Some had already lived in Western countries for years and found themselves unable or unwilling to return. Others fled China in fear of punishment or severe harassment by the authorities, whilst some simply wished to leave China to settle abroad. This paper tries to establish their various reasons for exile, its consequences for the individuals concerned, its influence on their works, and ultimately their role as a politically engaged group or school.

Any number of *Today's* contributors could be discussed here, but this paper limits itself to writers who share (or at one time shared) the following criteria:

- writers based in Europe;
- involvement in *Today* since its re-launch (attendance of founding meeting, subsequent gatherings, meetings and conferences, etc.).
- acquaintance or friendship with other writers who share the above criteria, prior to leaving China (most actually did know each other through the *Today* magazine of the late 1970s, or its succeeding organisations), or since.

Groups and Schools in the Literary Field

To provide a working definition of 'groups' (*shetuan*) and 'schools' (*liupai*), I follow Michel Hockx³ who sees institutionalisation as the distinguishing feature of a group. In the case of a school, the shared ideology, prerequisite for both groups and school, is not represented by a single institution.

The hazards of researching a contemporary topic make it difficult to establish exact criteria for the existence and constitution of a group. Even if we agree that a group is represented by its organisation or institution, and, if we look at exile literati, *Today* would just be such an institution, its group-dynamic reality may still differ from outside perception, and the degree to which its actions are co-ordinated and commonly supported is impossible to judge. It is therefore with caution that the existence of a group is assumed.

On a higher level of abstraction, schools and groups seem to be similar entities. Taking one step back, we can follow Pierre Bourdieu, who offers the all-embracing term 'fields'.

Fields of cultural production propose to those who are involved in them a *space of possibilities* that tends to orient their research, even without their knowing it, by defining the universe of problems, references, intellectual benchmarks (often constituted by the names of its leading figures), concepts in *-ism*, in short, all that one must have in the back of one's mind in order to be in the game.' (Bourdieu 1993: 176)

If we agree with Bourdieu's assessment, it is entirely understandable why the line between schools and groups is so fuzzy. A group defines its ideology within narrower boundaries, or rather adheres to it in a stricter sense, whilst a school is a multi-faceted product as the audience (be it reader, scholar or critic) perceives an ideology, or creates the impression of one, by metaphorising the (unknown quantity) group into a known category, to which an ideology is attached, regardless of whether it has at any time been propagated by the 'members' of the school.

A group, then, may never develop into a school, but for the inevitability of outside influence, either active – when new members join and a 'movement', for instance, different institutions promoting the same aims, develops; or passive – when the audience starts classifying the group as school.

Although it is not a *sine qua non* condition, a group is in praxis the first step towards a school. But as much as a group may change involuntarily (and maybe even 'wrongly', i.e. by unjustified pressure from the outside) into a school, so can a school be brought into being by outside perception which has little or nothing to do with group-dynamic reality. The label itself then becomes an event.

Group and school building has taken place in contemporary China since 1978, and before that in the underground. It is debatable how and to what extent a literary field (as discussed by Bourdieu) is constituted in a socialist society, where ideology is state-imposed. According to Bourdieu (1993: 184), 'to speak today on the literary fact is [. . .] to place oneself or to be placed with respect to a space of possibilities that is the product of [. . .] a long struggle among theories and theoreticians, writings and writers, readings and readers.'³ This struggle may always take place, whatever the circumstances, but within much narrower boundaries determined by the severity of censorship. China's literature could only 'break through' after 1976 (McDougall 1988: 35–65).

Exile

Since the writers this article is concerned with are mainly linked by its members' similar experience of exile, a discussion about exile has to be included. This is even more important, as the exact nature of exile is debated even amongst those who seem to be afflicted; and although exile is an international phenomenon, it is nevertheless differently perceived in different cultures; most telling are the contrasting views in English-speaking countries as opposed to others, for instance European countries.

Exile itself has a confusing array of meaning. Even the Romans as inventors of this term (though not of the punishment itself, this 'honour' goes probably to the ancient Egyptians; or, for the faithful, to the Christian God, who first sent insubordinate citizens out of Eden into banishment) allowed more interpretations than the original meaning 'being sent away as a punishment', namely the voluntary exile. It is interesting to note that in both classical European and classical Chinese cultures exile was intended as a punishment mostly for political crimes, and mainly imposed on members of the ruling class or other privileged citizens. Less privileged people, especially nowadays, are more often referred to as 'refugees'.

In this context, an expatriate is someone who has left his or her home country without pressing need, or for pure financial or artistic reasons. He or she becomes an émigré when the wish to return to the home country vanishes.

Writers throughout the world's history have notoriously been affected by exile. Even if not actually punished or forced to leave their country, many chose to live in a state of 'inner exile', isolating themselves from intellectual company and living in a state of highly artistic consciousness. In this century, Europe alone has already witnessed the emergence of several exile literatures, from the Eastern Bloc countries, the Soviet Union, Germany and Spain. Generally speaking, the absence of war-time enemy occupation or revolutions has left a different image of exile in most English-speaking countries, such as Great Britain and the United States, which usually served as host countries for exiles. In a recent English-language anthology of exile, *The Oxford Book of Exile* (Simpson 1995), there are only occasional first-hand accounts of true exiles. Instead it focuses on the reaction of locals to exiles (London especially has a tradition of hosting exiles from all over the world), or delves into voluntary or other forms of exile to the point of absurdity (e.g. when it relates to the surroundings of the South Africa Rugby Union team's trip to England for a test match for the first time in 22 years, after the end of Apartheid (ibid.: 332-3)).

While dealing with the topic of exile, one has to bear in mind these different conceptions of the term by the players in the literary field, which might be formed or defined by different cultural preconceptions or different personal experiences.

A group of Chinese exile writers?

There are certain difficulties in categorising Chinese writers living abroad as a coherent group (or even a school) of 'exiled writers'. One could argue that any kind of literature produced by a writer living abroad is exile literature, but not much is gained by such a definition, as it is too broad to find recurring features which allow the reader to relate to certain experiences unique to writers who have lived through the pain and anguish of exile. Nevertheless, the writers discussed here only share a common exile background when this very same, broad definition of exile is applied, which shall serve to highlight the difficulties of the nascent exile movement, as it is a generous temporary home for many but a permanent one for only a few.

It is assumed here that a group in the sense of 'somehow belonging to each other' does exist. The condition of living in exile is the binding link.⁴ This is not necessarily perceived as such by group members, who may even deny the very existence of such a group, or, at the very least, their individual membership of it.⁵ In order to make a living, most of the writers are or have been attached to universities in their new home towns or enjoy the benefits of writers-in-residence programmes or similar schemes.

Can we then find evidence that the label *liuwang wenxue* (exile literature) was invented and imposed on a group of Chinese writers living abroad? After all, these writers were, up to the 1980s, a social group and arguably even a school, when they started to disperse, losing and never regaining their ideological impetus – not even after they were forced under considerable pressure by external events (i.e. exile) to 're-group' after 1989.

Apart from different notions of the term exile, there are also different states of exile, so one individual's experience may totally differ from another one's. Alienation seems to be a common denominator, but differences are based on the opposite: identification. Elisabeth Bronfen (1994: 71) cites three possibilities:

- the identification with the status of exile, which can result in the state of loss becoming a fetish;
- the identification with the host country, which ideally can lead to complete assimilation, whether this is a good thing or not;
- the identification with the country of origin, which may result in incurable nostalgia.

***Liuwang wenxue* in the Literary Field**

One has to tread extremely carefully when examining any field in contemporary literature. Audiences are notoriously fickle, fashions come and go, writers change their opinions (or did not reveal their true opinion in the first place), and critics and reviewers may be motivated by more than objective reasons. What can be obtained, and is attempted here, is at best a snapshot of an enormously complex motif. For this purpose, the following, interview-based portraits of six players in this particular literary field are as descriptive as possible.

The exiled writers

*The émigré: Li Li*⁶

Li Li is a rare example of a poet giving up his native language to write in the language of his adopted home country. Li Li came to Sweden in 1988, after having worked for several years as a Swedish translator in China, and settled down in Stockholm. Three years later he had his first two poetry collections in Swedish published. He still maintains links to the Chinese exile scene, occasionally publishing Chinese poems in *Today*. He thinks that some of the works published in *Today* could certainly be classified as exile literature, but he dislikes the term and prefers not to be classified as an exile writer. He sees his future in writing Swedish poetry. He is afraid that part of his success in Sweden is due to the 'novelty' factor of a person 'from the other end of the world' writing in Swedish, but he is encouraged by critics who deal with him as part of the Swedish literary scene.

For himself he acknowledges a first phase similar to those most exiles experience in their first years abroad. He feels he can relate to an exile's conditions, in his own words: 'I'm very sensitive to their problems, because I live here. My problems are very similar to an exile's problems.' His first three years in Sweden were the most difficult, but since then he has felt at home in Swedish society. He sees the same change in his own works, as his recent poetry is very different from that written earlier.

Asked about his opinion on exile literature, he feels it is too confusing at the moment, and may well take another five or ten years, to develop into a strong branch of Chinese literature.

*The expat: Xu Xing*⁷

Xu Xing came to Germany in late 1989. Regarded as a leading exponent of the mid-1980s 'hooligan literature' (*liumang wenxue*) scene, he was one of the original members on the editorial board of the re-launched *Today*, where he published two short stories and one play during the following years. He very strongly denied being a true exile, as for him this term implies either active punishment or a flight for fear of one's own life, neither of which would apply to him. Moreover, he stressed that it was not even his literary work which had forced him to leave China (Xu Xing et al. 1993: 240-2). Yet he too went through different phases: from the initial active involvement

in a nascent exile movement, when he probably saw himself as an exile, too⁸, to active resentment of being labelled as such, when he resigned from *Today's* editorial board and, in 1994, returned to China.

The floaters: Yang Lian and YoYo⁹

If there is an exile literature, then its outstanding member is Yang Lian. This was the consensus of all interviewees. Curiously, Yang Lian himself resents the term *liuwang*; instead he proposes the term *piaobo*, 'floating', or 'ambiguous'. Born in Bern, Switzerland, in 1955, he started 'floating' through the countries of the world at the earliest age. Having left China in 1988, he and his wife YoYo were both denied an extension of their Chinese passports when living in New Zealand, so both took up a new nationality, that of New Zealanders. Technically, this makes them both foreigners and would allow them to easily re-enter China, although Yang Lian sees it as an indignity to visit his own home country on a tourist visa. Still, there have been occasions in the past when this sense of indignity was overruled by other reasons and both Yang Lian and YoYo managed to enter Mainland China on at least two occasions.

Yang Lian's poetry is obsessed with life and death; a German critic even called him 'apocalyptic' (*Die Zeit* 30 September 1994: 75). For him, exile is a central theme, but he sees it as one of the fundamental experiences of life, and he tries to put it in a wider context of 'life's essentials'. He is also politically active, venting his anger at the disregard of human rights in China in numerous articles in German newspapers when he was living in Stuttgart in 1995–6. Since moving to the United Kingdom, he has been engaged with the organisation Index for Censorship and has co-edited an issue of the organisation's eponymous magazine devoted to Hongkong (*Index on Censorship: Hong Kong goes back* 1997: 30–192).

For YoYo, exile is her defining moment as a writer. A former editor for an arts publisher, she developed careers as a designer and painter before she started writing, which was only after she had left China, but has had a prolific output since. Her work often shows the world of exile in miniature: the daily harassment and frustrations; the alienation from China; and even an alienation from herself as a woman and as a human being.

*Transcending exile: Duoduo*¹⁰

Another poet who emerged from the underground in the late 1970s is Duoduo. Duoduo left China on June 4, 1989, the day of the Tiananmen Massacre. Although a more dramatic flight could have hardly been better stage-managed, it was in fact a long-prepared trip which would take him first to London and then to a poetry festival in Rotterdam. Since then, he has spent time in the UK, the Netherlands, Canada and Germany. He now seems to have settled down in the Netherlands. Apart from scholarships and stints as writer-in-residence, numerous translations and contracts as newspaper columnist have assured him a living as writer (Van Crevel 1996: 102-7).

Duoduo conceded that the effect of life as an exile was greater than he had thought. Initially he had believed that his experience of 'inner exile' in China had prepared him for his new life as an exile. He admits exile's influence on his early works in exile with regard to plot choice and emotions. Since then, however, he feels he has moved on and put the 'exile phase' behind him. In another interview (Vanza 1994), when asked where his home is, he found this question difficult to answer. 'If home is the place where your sentiments and emotions [. . .] lie, then, at the moment I don't think it is China' (160).

His own statement, that he has 'put the exile phase behind him', is supported by Maghiel van Crevel who has shown that Duoduo's poems can be read as neither political nor Chinese (Ke Lei [Maghiel van Crevel] 1993: 206-18). Van Crevel extends this to works before and after 1989. It seems that in order to speak of an 'exile phase' in Duoduo's work, one has to look at his other literary output, in particular at his short stories.

The editor: Chen Maiping

Most of the interviewees readily acknowledged the existence of an exile literature. Chen Maiping was no exception¹¹. Chen, now living in Stockholm, has been editor of the magazine *Today* since its re-launch in 1990. He occupies a unique, pivotal role in linking Western and Chinese critics as well as Mainland and exiled writers. He is also, under the *nom de plume* Wan Zhi, an accomplished writer in his own right, but since his occupation with *Today* had only limited opportunities to continue writing, even less to publish, in particular as he does not wish to publish his own work in *Today*.

The experience of Chinese literary exiles, Chen stresses, is very different to those who live as ordinary residents in a foreign country, but also to exiles from other cultures. Western exiles, the Russians for instance, were, according to him, more occupied with the importance of individual freedom [*geren ziyou*], while some of the Chinese exiles, most notably Liu Zaifu, are still using 'anti-individualistic' language [*fei gerenhua de yuyan*], even when emphasising the importance of resisting China's political system.

Chen sees the current exile scene as rather static; no new stars are emerging, and the influence of those famous prior to their exile is, on the whole, diminishing.

The exile journal: *Today*

As it is, Bei Dao and Chen Maiping's Scandinavia-based *TODAY* magazine has until recently provided a potential site, or at least focus, for such a free association of writers for whom not conformity but a human and humanizing culture for China would be the aim. (Lee 1993: 76).

Lee does not follow up his classification 'until recently', but there are changes in *Today's* position which diminish its potential as a provider for such a site. Mainly, the interaction with readers and contributors has dwindled, the occasionally featured letters to the editor have disappeared and editorials are published less frequently; in addition one of the biggest changes was probably the decision to include material from writers still living in China. *Today's* outlook has shifted from the relatively small group of exiles to the much broader field of contemporary Chinese literature. Indeed, it may well be the most diverse journal in that respect and it has increased its influence on China, although, for the time being, not in a political, only in a literary sense.¹²

Other Chinese exile media

Chinese communities all over the world are served by numerous publications, but as far as I am aware, *Today* is the only surviving literary magazine of many founded in the years 1989–1990 with a large section reserved for literature produced by exiles; unlike, for instance, the US-based *Guangchang* (*Public Square*), which does not seem to be in existence anymore.¹³ With *Qingxiang* (*Tendency*),

another magazine originally published in China has recently been revived, under the editorship of Bei Ling. There is a growing number of literary magazines distributed using the new information technologies like email or the World Wide Web (WWW). Examples are *Huaxia wenzhai* (*China News Digest*), *Fenghuayuan* (*Maple Leaf Garden*), or *Xin yusi* (*New Threads*). Apart from articles of a more journalistic nature, however, these magazines provide very little genuinely new literary material. There seems to be little or no awareness of works in Chinese produced by the group of writers in exile. Otherwise, these magazines serve rather as a community forum, often featuring discussions between their readers, or offering news from China originally published in traditional print media. Chen Maiping said about these magazines: 'For me, they are more part of the mass media; their importance is the same as the [conventional] media's. Their influence with regard to China may be big, certainly much bigger than *Today's*.'¹⁴

All these magazines are distributed from outside China (mainly from the USA), and their intended audience is the Chinese expatriate. There is nothing coming out of China and it is questionable how much of it is ever getting into China, although China has opened its electronic gateways considerably in the last few years.

The Audience

One has to distinguish at least four different types of audiences, with different backgrounds and different expectations. Readership is divided into specialist/non-specialist as well as into Western/Chinese. The Chinese audience can be furthermore divided into those living abroad, and those in China. In the following, only the Western audience and the Chinese audiences abroad are examined, as these are the most likely to interact with the exiled writers (cf. McDougall 1996).

The attitude of the Western non-specialist audience can be summed up as follows: they notice the presence of some of the most famous representatives of modern Chinese literature in their midst and the media are following it up, and reviewers are often generous with praise for translated works. Yet the selling figures clearly indicate that such interest is limited. The non-specialist audience prefers émigré literature like Jung Chang's *Wild Swans* (1991),¹⁵ which was on *The Times* best-seller list for over 100 weeks, or Min Anchee's

semi-autobiographical *Red Azalea* (1993), which, if not equally successful, was marketed – in Great Britain at least – in much the same way as *Wild Swans*.

Western sinologists in the literary field are not only critics of Chinese literature, but also translators and promoters of Chinese writers. For them the old adage came true in its reverse: the mountain came indeed to the prophet. For professional or social reasons the first call for assistance and help by the freshly exiled was often made to them. Translation opportunities increased, and the extra exposure of exiles should have helped marketing as well – and attempts were certainly made, although little effect is seen (McDougall 1994).

Translations of works exclusively dedicated to one writer have increased as well, which is particularly true in the cases of Duoduo and Yang Lian. Yang Lian, for instance, is now the most-translated contemporary Chinese poet in Germany (Zhang-Kubin 1994: 104, note 1).

In anthologies, on the other hand, material from the mainland still dominates. The highly political anthology *New Ghosts, Old Dreams: Chinese Rebel Voices* (Barmé and Jaivin 1992) features only very few references to exile: for example the acceptance speech of the Nobel Peace Prize by the Dalai Lama (pp. 457–9), reports by Bei Ling (pp. 461–5) and Duoduo (pp. 467–8) talking about their first impressions of exile, and, more ambiguously, a reference to the exile of Hou Dejian (p. 414), the Taiwanese pop star whose great commitment to the demonstrations in 1989 resulted in him being banned from mainland China by the communist government. This raises the interesting question, whether one can be exiled from a country which is not one's home country in the first place, if, indeed, China is not to be considered Hou's home country after all.

Another sinologist who writes about Chinese literature is Howard Goldblatt, of whom Gregory Lee in 1990, reviewing his then latest edited collection of essays *Worlds Apart: Recent Chinese Writing and its Audiences* (*China Quarterly* 124: 774–5), wrote: 'Most of China's writers now abroad are still stunned by the events of June 1989, but something may come of their wanderings and perhaps the next volume of essays from Howard Goldblatt will be addressing emergent exile literature.' Goldblatt's new anthology, *Chairman Mao Would Not Be Amused* (1995), however, explicitly avoids tackling the issue of exile literature, and although it includes exiled writers (Ai Bei in New York, Duoduo in Leiden, Hong Ying in London), care was taken that

the chosen story was originally written or published in mainland China (p. xiii).

A rare publication exclusively dedicated to exile literature is *Undersky Underground* (Zhao and Cayley 1994), an anthology drawn from the first six issues of the re-launched *Today* magazine. This was recently followed up by a second volume, entitled *Abandoned Wine* (Zhao and Cayley 1996).

If the phenomenon of exile has yet to be included as a matter of course and treated at length in publication on contemporary Chinese literature, conferences on this topic show that it does occupy the interest of Western scholars. 'Chinese Literature Abroad', theme for a conference in Heidelberg (December 1992), attracted a number of Chinese writers, not only from the Mainland, as well as scholars from several countries, and so did the 'Chinese Writing and Exile' conference in Chicago (May 1991). Both conferences, however, revealed the difficulties in dealing with contemporary exile and often referred to examples of earlier periods.

A conference of Chinese writers abroad, in Stockholm in 1990, which followed a meeting in Oslo to establish the new editorial board of *Today*, was too close to the June Fourth Incident to provide any analysis of contemporary Chinese exile literature.¹⁶ Still, the Stockholm conference was an event where *Today* editorial members represented themselves as a group towards the outside world (for instance, the reporter Arne Ruth of the influential Swedish newspaper *Dagens Nyheter* was invited), in contrast to the Oslo meeting, which was closed to non-group members, but nevertheless provided a 'group feeling' for those who attended. No media were invited, but one day was set apart as a 'public day'.

A specialist Chinese audience abroad is by its very nature nearly identical with the producers of this literature. It is not the aim of this article to establish to what degree writers write for their fellow writers as target audience, but all interviewees stated that they were reading *Today* regularly. In a critique on contemporary Chinese literature, not distinguishing between exile and non-exile, Yang Lian expresses his concern about the lack of success of his fellow writers and artists, both commercially and artistically: 'the Chinese contemporary literature which is accepted in the West has not passed the test of its own, or the West's, critical standard' (Yang 1996). Yang Lian finds fault with critics and Western audiences as well, wondering whether 'positive racial discrimination' (ibid.) allows old-fashioned styles still to be represented in the West on the grounds that, as they are

Chinese, they are to be tolerated even if they are not representing anything new.

According to Chen Maiping, the first issues of *Today* found, at least in Sweden, a positive reaction from the Chinese community living there. But their interest quickly dwindled, as did their importance for the publishing of the magazine. There are only few cases of a collaboration between Chinese expatriates and exiles, most notably the bilingual anthology *Tianwai you tian – Another Province: new Chinese writing from London* (Lim and Li 1994), which includes a wide range of writers of different origins: second-generation Chinese, half-Chinese, writers from Taiwan, Mainland China, Malaysia and Hong Kong. The only thing they all have in common, as the title suggests, is that they are all based in London.

Some of the writers in exile prefer to associate with fellow exile writers, or Chinese students, or with Western sinologists or other Westerners. All of them vigorously denied feeling like becoming a *huaqiao* (Overseas Chinese). The communities created by Chinese from a different socio-economic background who have settled in their respective host countries holds little attraction for the exiles. As Chen Maiping put it: 'This experience [of living abroad] is rather complex. [The exiled writers' experience] is not very similar to that of those ordinarily living in a foreign country.'¹⁷ A contrasting view was provided by Li Li, who said 'Humans are lazy. It is very easy to blend in [the Chinese community]. You write for a newspaper, and earn enough for a living.'¹⁸ But he also acknowledges the danger of then 'drying up'. 'To write international literature one has to make an effort.'¹⁹

Conclusion

Alienation is a central theme when dealing with exile literature, be it the example of Juan Ramón Jiménez or contemporary Chinese exiles. It is an extreme situation, which puts the concerned under social and artistic pressure. Alienation is the expression of exile as the lesser evil. But as this overview of the field of exile literature shows, there is, as for now, no clear picture, no definable structure and no organised politically or artistically motivated movement emerging. If anything, the opposite, more confusion and more diversity, seems more likely. '[. . .] how will Chinese Modernism negotiate the emerging globalised capitalism of which consumerist China of late twentieth-century is now a part? It would require great strength of will and some sort of coming together, a sort of association of writers, artists

and thinkers in exile' (Lee 1993: 76). Lee's cautiously worded appeal is until now not heeded.

The reason for this lies partly in the set-up of the group. To illustrate this, let us consider two writers as examples and try to define their concrete status. The case for Li Li not being an exile is strong: he denies being an exile, he does not write primarily in Chinese, he is part of the Swedish literary scene and he could return to China without fear of punishment. On the other hand, one should never blindly accept someone's self-description: he does write in Chinese, he does publish in a Chinese exile magazine and he might experience some form of harassment should he decide to return to China. The second example is Yang Lian, who seems convincingly to be an exile: he refers frequently at readings to his status as exile, he is one of the most influential and, in translations, most widely published members of those commonly labelled as exile writers, he has been refused an extension of his Chinese passport and a permanent return to China might prove to be dangerous. The case against: Yang Lian has also stated his preference for the term 'floating', he publishes in China, he travels back and therefore he could return.

The writers themselves define exile differently, and have different aspirations. Li Li sees his future in the Swedish literary scene, and thus as an *émigré* writer. Xu Xing, for example, denied being an exile, and subsequently returned to China. Part of the problem may be the unpredictable nature of Chinese politics. For many writers it is indeed possible to return, and even those who are likely to be refused re-entry manage to get officially published in China, thus maintaining a position as mainland writers which is contradictory to the status of an exile.

The following criteria seem to be crucial for a more precise answer: the degree and necessity of involvement in an exile movement, the degree of danger of persecution and punishment upon return, a coefficient of the desire to return and the risks involved, and the compatibility of a writer's work and his or her attitude towards publishing should they choose to return: how many compromises (self-censorship) have to be made to continue writing without fear, if it were at all possible?

Although a process of negative elimination applying these criteria still involves subjective judgement, the past record of the Chinese Communist Party may serve as a fairly decent guide towards their attitude of tolerance. Li Li, not wishing to return, can thus safely be eliminated from the inner core of exiles. Yang Lian, who clearly wishes to return as demonstrated by his previous visits, can probably

not afford to, or at the very least, would be severely restricted in continuing his work and hence qualifies as an exile.

The initial attempt, mainly via the outlet *Today*, to form a group has, by and large, failed. An exile literature with an underlying ideology shared by a majority of its members, expressed in either political or artistic aspirations, be it to provoke political changes in the homeland or to challenge artistic concepts 'unchallengable' there, needs unity, mutual agreement about the aims as much as a homogenous background, and here it seems lie the difficulties *Today* has been experiencing. Different writers are developing different strategies, from slow re-assimilation with the mainland scene to complete alienation. The emergence of individual writers, rather than that of a group, can have its benefits as well, as Torbjörn Lodén states: 'For the culture of China which, no matter how illustrious, suffers from the ills of insularity, few things could be more promising than the appearance of first-rate writers of world literature. Gao Xingjian has now joined the ranks. So has Bei Dao. And many more are coming.' (Lodén 1993: 36)

Still, as for now, the reaction of the Western audience has not proved to be great encouragement to the exiles, and there also remains work to be done by Western scholars who are torn between promoting the amassed talent here in the West and not at the same time overlooking the fast-changing, exciting, and confusing literary scene of the mainland.

But in the end, there is a core of exile writers, not yet speaking with a voice echoing under the roof-top of the literary playing field, but slowly gathering their own understanding of their new role, having undergone the same literary development, of which the first stages, the dealing with nostalgia, the concern with very individual problems, the discovery of their own status as 'being different', are already under way. Their common experiences and their common desire to change may lead to an internationally acknowledged and, for China, important exile school, whatever its name may be.

Notes

- 1 My (very literal) translation, quoted after Naharro-Calderón 1988: 36. Jiménez' exile experience is discussed in detail in this article (35–48). For biographical details see, for instance, Brown 1972. A comprehensive anthology of his work was published shortly after Jiménez won the Nobel prize: Jiménez 1959. Poetry anthologies in translation include: Esteban

- 1980 and Jiménez 1950. I am indebted to Borja Suarez for helping me understand the Spanish sources and for providing assistance with the translation.
- 2 It is worth pointing out that nearly all of the writers discussed in this paper had appeared on television and given numerous interviews with newspapers of their respective host countries.
 - 3 Personal communication, 28 March 1996.
 - 4 Gregory Lee avoids a direct classification by cautiously calling a collection of conference essays about this topic 'Chinese Writing and Exile' (and not, for instance, 'Chinese Exile Writers/Writing'), though he does label individual writers like Gao Xingjian and Duoduo as exile writers. See Lee 1993: iii–vii.
 - 5 Which was made clear by Xu Xing in a speech at a conference in Heidelberg. The speech is reprinted in *Today* 1993: 1, 239–53.
 - 6 The following is based on an interview with Li Li, conducted in Stockholm on 25 May 1995.
 - 7 I first met Xu Xing shortly after he arrived in Heidelberg in November 1989. Since then we have had numerous conversations, the last of these in May 1994.
 - 8 For instance, he won a scholarship in 1990 from the Heinrich-Böll Foundation, which was previously reserved for exiles from the Soviet Union.
 - 9 In 1994, I had several opportunities to talk to both of them, but a more formal interview was conducted in Stuttgart, on 10 June 1995.
 - 10 The following is based on an interview with Duoduo in Leiden on 8 June 1995.
 - 11 The following is based on an interview with Chen Maiping, conducted in Stockholm on 25 May 1995.
 - 12 For instance, two mainland writers from Nanjing, Zhu Wen and Han Dong, had their first publications in *Today* before they found popularity in mainland China.
 - 13 *Yihang (First Line)*, edited by Yan Li, is an altogether different case. Also, it was founded before 1989.
 - 14 Interview with Chen Maiping, Stockholm, 25 May 1995.
 - 15 Incidentally, her book proved to be a big success in her brother's Chinese translation published in Taiwan (Zhang Rong 1992). A publication in mainland China, however, failed due to the author's unwillingness to allow cuts by the Chinese editor – according to Jung Chang herself, related at a public lecture in the Museum of London, 13 February 1994.
- It has to be admitted that *Wild Swans* is strictly speaking non-fictional. But given that most of the work by the exiled writers is of extensively autobiographical nature, and often dealing with similar material, the comparison seems legitimate.
- 16 Yu Xiaoxing, 'Haiwai Zhongguo zuojia taolunhui jiyao' (Summary Notes of a Conference on Chinese Writers Abroad)', in: *Jintian (Today)*, 1990: 2 [v.11], 94–103.
 - 17 Interview with Chen Maiping, Stockholm, 25 May 1995.
 - 18 Interview with Li Li, Stockholm, 25 May 1995.
 - 19 Ibid.

Displacing the Political

Zhang Yimou's *To Live* and the field of film

Wendy Larson

Introduction

Two concepts developed by Pierre Bourdieu, that of the *habitus* and of the *field*, have been very influential in cultural studies, mainly because they are particularly useful in describing the way in which culture appears to proceed according to rules – which actually do not function in a directly prescribed manner – without being collectively orchestrated. The *habitus*, the result of a long process of formal and informal education, can be described as a ‘feel for the game’ that lasts through one’s lifetime, functions within many contexts, and derives from and incorporates objective social relationships. The *field* is a hierarchically organised social formation that is relatively autonomous, has its own laws, and is determined by the positions of its agents. Within Bourdieu’s methodology, what is important in cultural analysis is not interpretation of any one element so much as its relationship to other elements in the system.

Along with the *habitus* and the *field*, Bourdieu also developed two other useful concepts. *Cultural capital* is the acquisition of knowledge and skills that can result in lucrative positions within any given field. *Symbolic capital* – fame, prestige, authority that comes from honours and awards – is not synonymous with economic capital but similarly is distributed unequally among social classes. For those working within fields of art and literature, symbolic capital involves *belief* in what constitutes value, and such a belief is specifically essentialist toward the field. Hermetic textual analysis supports the notion that the work of art contains value, and hides the power relations that it

reproduces. For art and literature, the autonomous aesthetic is an important part of the entire system of value/power production, and the more autonomous a field is, the more it produces symbolic capital that is inversely related to the economic field. In particular, 'the literary field is the economic field reversed' (Bourdieu 1993: 164). Therefore, the more money a (living) author or painter makes, the less likely his or her works will gain high symbolic capital.

Bourdieu's approach has solved a number of practical problems. For example, his theory of practice moves away from regarding practice as a mechanical reaction, granting the agent the ability to respond with a strategic calculation. Yet because the agent's response must make sense in relation to objective conditions and potentialities, he or she rejects anything totally improbable and thus does not have free will to determine meaning (Bourdieu 1990: 72–77). Bourdieu also has moved past the common dichotomies – individual and society, freedom and necessity – through which we were used to analysing the social world, while developing the intellectual ideas of subjectivism, or the attempt to apprehend the world according to the understandings of those within, and objectivism, or the search for the objective relations which give rise to social practices (Bourdieu 1991a: 11).

Still, as many critics have pointed out, difficulties remain.¹ Because Bourdieu's theories are complex and compelling in their ability to explain not how a single text or object gains our belief or admiration, but how the entire arena of artistic and literary production works, they create a supremely overarching approach to cultural studies, one in which *any* social world can be analysed. In the post-modern critical world any universal explanatory narrative is suspect simply because of its grandiose nature and its general refusal to recognise evidence and situations where it explains little. Furthermore, the critic or professor who takes Bourdieu seriously has no choice but to severely question the way he or she writes, teaches, and talks, with good answers and methods not necessarily forthcoming. Within Bourdieu's analysis, any kind of aesthetics appears as the worst and most deceptive ideological tool, value is profit of some sort, and our very choice of what to teach and research reveals our struggle for power within our own fields. Presciently anticipating the pedagogic and scholarly crisis that his work could cause, Bourdieu asks: 'What do we gain through this particular approach to the work of art? Is it worth reducing and destroying, in short breaking the spell of the work in order to account for it and to learn what it is all about?' (1993: 190) Using words like

'spell', 'disenchantment', 'alchemy', 'eternal mysteries', 'spiritualism', and 'charismatic', (1993: 190–1; 1991a: 115), Bourdieu comments that his interpretative methods disallow in the participant total belief or pleasure, instead insisting on the detachment that always first recognises the ideological framework within which one works. While Bourdieu defends the human aspect of what he calls a realistic vision, he sees that the loss of magic, or of exchanging being and acting 'naturally' for understanding how and why one's world is constructed along the lines of power relationships, for many may be too high a price to pay.² This trade-off also carries in it the danger that a participant may lose belief, desire, agency, and eventually all ability to act, because any field must first and foremost function as a power arena, and the ideologies which sustain action (in the case of art and literature, creativity, a deeper truth waiting to be revealed, indifference to monetary rewards) are but smoke-screens under which lurks an elaborately hidden system of self-benefit. Furthermore, an agent's desire to recognise and modify or escape from the functional conditions of any field are doomed to fail, for there is no alternative site or environment that works differently. And finally, the aesthetic approach or content of art and literature, often thought by the artist or writer to be revolutionary, profound, and worthwhile, in Bourdieu's interpretation become only attempts to produce difference and get one's name on the map of the field's most skilled (symbolic capital), capable (cultural capital), or wealthy (economic capital).

In his introduction to Bourdieu's work, Randall Johnson praises the 'self-referentiality' of Bourdieu's own writing, claiming that the work is 'constantly questioning and verifying its own presuppositions' (ibid.: 20). Yet in his analysis of art and literature, Bourdieu situates his work within Western cultural traditions and the development of capitalism, where the autonomous aesthetic is highly developed and has become a part of normalised life, and does not consider whether it will be effective in explaining this aspect of cultural production in another radically different locale, in a culture that has not experienced the same economic system as those under capitalism, or in a society where 'art for art's sake' is not a widely accepted concept. Even less does he consider any variation that may occur in contemporary Third- as opposed to First-World countries, both of which are functioning under conditions of global capitalism which express themselves differently depending on the locale.

Bourdieu believes that the economic field, while an excellent model for describing the way other fields work, is itself only one field

among many, and possesses no overarching transcendence. It is power, including economic, cultural, and symbolic power, that drives competition within the fields and through the necessary introduction by agents of difference, creates the sense of time or history. The transformation of history into nature which is the habitus also produces the unconscious, which is 'the forgetting of history which history itself produces' (Bourdieu 1990: 78–9). Money is a form of power within the economic field, but not necessarily or only relatively within others, which function by their own guidelines. It is this concept – that the economic field is but one among many, and yet working homologously sets the standard for the others in that all work along the economic structural lines of 'profit', 'loss', and 'competition', that film production in a Third-World country such as China can jar and disable.³ Unlike the earlier arts of painting and writing, film in any culture throws a number of obstacles at Bourdieu's theories, and in Third-World countries, the contradictions become even more glaring.

In this chapter, I analyse the film *Huozhe* (*To Live*) directed by Fifth Generation director Zhang Yimou, with three goals in mind. First, I argue that the existence and cultural practices of Third-world countries, especially as they relate to film, show that the economic field is not just one among many, but in the equivalence between artistic success in the first world and local economic gain, overwhelms and dismantles the 'laws' of the other fields. Second, and closely related to the position of the economic field, when cultural production in Third-World countries is taken into consideration, the relationship between the field and the habitus must be rethought. A participant's habitus may well be produced by a local environment, but the object, artefact, or event could come out of demands made by an international community. The notions of the field and habitus then lose their explanatory power, because their parameters must be redefined with every analysis. Third, because gender meaning is a particularly sensitive marker of global modernity and yet is an important local aspect of the power hierarchy, it is particularly subject to the fluctuation in field and habitus that occurs when First- and Third-World cultures collide. I use an example of gender construction to illustrate some problems with field and habitus as they apply to Third-World film. Thus while working well to explain the way consciousness and culture function in a limited time and space, Bourdieu's analysis does not adequately theorise the situation of global culture today.

Money and the Movies

To produce and market a film, generally vast resources are required, and because technology is expensive, a filmmaker cannot, like a writer or artist, have a 'day job' that will allow her or him to produce art in the evening. Even if a director does make a few inexpensive films, long-term sustenance of the artist's lifestyle to which Bourdieu refers ('the aestheticisation of the artistic lifestyle', 1993: 209) is almost impossible. This refusal of economic privilege in the name of art is even more difficult and problematic in a Third-World country, where reliance on one's job, savings, or money from friends and relatives will be insufficient to see even a low-class film through to production. In his volume describing the making of *To Live*, Wang Bin tells of the many times Zhang Yimou, Yu Hua, Gong Li, Lu Wei, and others met in expensive hotels, planning the plot of the film, discussing characterisation, going over the screenplay, and in general isolating themselves from social demands so that they could work. That environment would be unavailable to someone without sufficient funds, and in the crowded living conditions of China's urban environments even the planning of a film would be difficult to accomplish.

Second, a film is almost always a collaborative enterprise, even though to date directors and famous stars generally have received the most credit for the success of a film, a fact that turns into symbolic capital at awards ceremonies where the director and stars gain the greatest attention. Yet it is widely recognised that the director cannot be viewed as a creator in the same way as a writer or painter often is. The people involved include minor actors and actresses, script-writers, aesthetic designers, costume designers, camera operators, make-up artists, song writers, and various technicians of all kinds, not to mention people living and working in the areas where films are made. All of these people, groups, and companies are now laboriously listed at the end of a film, and the audience is kept in the theatre to read their names through a number of devices, including original songs that play while the credits go by, voice-overs that continue the film dialogue, and the possibility that a final scene will appear during or after the credits. It is precisely these conditions – which are generally thought of as part of the doxa of film-making – that change the nature of film as art and ultimately alter art itself, somewhat, although not completely, removing from film the possibility that it will function as an independent field.

Third, in Third-World countries there is rarely enough capital available for sophisticated film production and distribution without investment from First-World countries, which means that the field within which a director/film group functions could be an international field that has little to do with the domestic field that supposedly sustains ideas about cultural production and creates the rules of the game. While it is possible to claim that the field has shifted into this global context, it is difficult to deny that that context, when compared to the domestic locale, may have contradictory demands, and the intermingling of the two fields affects the way each functions. Thus parts of a film may respond to implicit or explicit demands from international investors, while other parts are calculated with the domestic audience in mind.

Even more significant is the fact that for Third-World filmmakers, success in the First World often means economic *and* artistic recognition, while simultaneously functioning as a marker of cultural identity, whereas for First-World film-makers the opposite is hardly true. Large-scale economic success, even for First-World film-makers whose films are not made in English, is hard to come by; the huge and lucrative market that America represents is not open to foreign language films in general, most of which must play in small art houses. But there is a crucial difference between films from the First and Third Worlds. Although both play in American art houses, indicating their gaining of artistic success, only Third-World films, which depict cultures that mainstream Americans cannot recognise, are viewed as representative of their cultures and appreciated as such. Thus Danish, French, and Dutch films generally are regarded simply as films with universal relevance, whereas popular critics inevitably interpret Chinese films as somehow indicative of Chinese history, essence, or society.⁴ The more successfully a Chinese film can represent itself as Chinese, the more artistic it will be thought, the more Western viewers will want to see it, and the more financial backing it will gain. It is not true that as in the case of literature, 'the literary field is the economic field reversed', in fact for Chinese film, the fields of film and economics function in tandem.

Altogether, these aspects of contemporary film culture dilute the concepts of habitus and field to the point where they do not work well to explain how films, especially those from non-Western or Third World cultures, function. It is the First/Third World difference in field that Zhang Yiwu finds when he compares the films of Fifth and Sixth Generation directors in China.⁵ Zhang Yiwu believes that Fifth

Generation film directors such as Zhang Yimou and Chen Kaige have targeted the international market, making films that are allegories of China and presenting Chinese culture not as investigation into actual Chinese history or contemporary society, but as responses to the implicit request, from capitalist countries, for another's history to fulfil their own desire and need for illusion, necessary to sustain the capitalist hope for the future and belief in progress. Zhang analyses the content of several films and claims that a sign of 'truth' in Fifth Generation directors' work is the incessant combination of love and recent history; this rewriting of the past reconstitutes it as a story and image of desire, and panders to the exoticism and eroticism that the capitalist West would like to assign to a commodified East.

I believe that Fifth Generation directors work on the basis of a structural dualism that through economic change and the huge disparity between First- and Third-world economic situations has produced an internal and an external market for Chinese culture. From the viewpoints of both the international and domestic audiences, however, these two markets are not clearly delineated as domestic and foreign, but swirl together in a mishmash loosely recognised, affirmed, and rejected by disparate audiences as Chinese culture. The two markets' very existence illustrates the unequal future of Third World culture within global post-modern society, and critics place films into one or the other depending on their ideological interpretation.

Sixth Generation film, Zhang Yiwu argues, makes an anti-allegorical statement that is best called the 'situation film' (*zhuangtai dianying*). Its directors make comedies that poke fun at the overly serious allegorical movies and refuse a historical context, instead delving into the present situation of contemporary Chinese life. Often autobiographical, Sixth Generation films focus on extremely limited local contexts, presenting a picture that is 'true to life' but that contains no large 'truth' (Zhang Yiwu 1994a: 10). Zhang Yiwu points out that the nature of time in the films is unclear, and that they combine ideas of observation with experience, and commonness with a sense of the avant-garde. First and foremost, these movies present no transparent or uncomplicated relationship between the film and cultural apparatus; in other words, they do not attempt or pretend to represent or symbolise Chinese culture in any way.

Paradoxically, because of lack of financial resources in the local market, the international success of Fifth Generation films is of no help to the struggling Sixth Generation directors, who do not get international financial backing. Fifth Generation films are the first to

make a name for Chinese film in the West, but they have played largely in small art houses and are viewed by a narrow, well-educated audience that seeks out international and award-winning films. This fact does not prevent them from being received by critics as representative of Chinese culture at large. Sixth Generation films are not a success in the West, and are not viewed even by local audiences as art films. The dichotomy that emerges in Zhang Yiwu's analysis is that of the elegant, allegorical, foreign-oriented, and well-supported Fifth Generation film against the vulgar, situational, domestic, and financially impoverished Sixth Generation film, a relationship he believes mirrors the two market situations and that of First/Third-world relations in general.

Zhang Yiwu's work is helpful when we look at Chinese film production, and also in setting the Chinese situation against Bourdieu's theories. We can see that because of the unique requirements of film making, the economic field pre-empts any other; this situation itself is not a domestic problem, however, but a context played out over and over as Third-World countries try to gain enough resources to enter global markets, success in which in turn gives them more resources. Nonetheless, the conditions of film-making that force Zhang Yimou to look outside China for funds and audiences are the same as those working within the domestic economy in more local and yet more widespread ways. When workers and entrepreneurs purchase cell phones, they are bypassing or transcending the local conditions of outdated phone lines and lack of access, which they perceive as limitations just as Zhang Yimou perceives the lack of money, recognition, and resources as limitations. When people purchase or rent videos from abroad, they enact the same process with regard to the 'limits' of domestically produced products. The purchase of foreign goods, the learning of English to allow one to get a job in a joint venture company, and application to study abroad are all examples of the same transcending mechanism. Thus the seeming dichotomy that emerges in Zhang Yiwu's analysis does not exactly hold; the symbolically domestic and foreign, vulgar and elite, allegorical and local is not a strict opposition, but a condition of Third-World culture itself.

Field, Habitus and Gender

In an article 'appropriating' Bourdieu's theories for feminism, Toril Moi dissects Bourdieu's parameters in discussing gender, which like

class, seems 'applicable to any social group whose members share a certain number of material and social conditions and thus also develop a common habitus' (Moi 1991: 1029). Moi finds that because gender is not really a field, 'gender capital' does not exist, and gender function is variable, sometimes emerging as paramount and other times receding into the background (ibid.: 1036–37). In *La Domination Masculine* (Bourdieu 1991b), a primary text in Moi's article, Bourdieu, like many feminist theorists before him, evaluates gender primarily as social construction. Despite Moi's positive comments on Bourdieu's work, I do not see that he has gone beyond the analysis that feminist theorists have provided.⁶ To go a step further and evaluate the usefulness of Bourdieu's approach – which differs little whether he is analysing gender or class – in understanding Third-World film as culture, we must look at the content and aesthetic approach of the film.

Like several other films of the past 20 years, Zhang Yimou's film *To Live* rewrites the modern past in terms of major political and cultural events: the civil war between the Communists and Nationalists, the Great Leap Forward, and the Cultural Revolution. The story's plot and focus, however, brings to the foreground the lives of 'ordinary' people and the way in which these tumultuous times were translated into daily life for them and their families. The film reworks the overtly political to become a personal registrar in which the political still forms the overarching framework, but individual decisions can determine the course of events that are most significant in daily life. This ordinariness, a special quality with a special name (*huoda*) is invested in the male character, who is responsible for maintaining the two important social units and relationships that replace the political passion of the past: that of *family* and of *friend*.

Director Zhang Yimou certainly admits that with this film he is trying to produce difference from both his own previous films and from those of the other Fifth Generation directors. When he was planning the film *To Live*, Zhang Yimou particularly stressed his desire to produce the commoner, someone who was neither particularly good nor bad, who was not noteworthy, and who lived the average life; at the same time, he did not want the film colonised by emphasis on folk customs or by creating 'antique' characters who embody past culture (Wang Bin 1994: 27, 52). This privileging of the commoner is not unusual in Fifth Generation and films, and according to Zhang Yiwu, constructs a myth that leads the viewer to mistakenly believe that she or he – a Western viewer – is

participating in the actual life of the other. As if conscious of critique from Zhang Yiwu, Zhang Yimou asks those working with him on a screenplay to write something less heavy and symbolic (and thus perhaps less accessible to interpretation), and more humour filled, than earlier films (ibid.: 72, 78).⁷

In many ways, *To Live* fits nicely into Zhang Yiwu's definition of the allegorical Fifth Generation film. It takes place in the past, symbolising Chinese history in the crucial events of the civil war, the Great Leap Forward, and the Cultural Revolution. Although Zhang Yimou insists that the addition of the puppets, which are not in the novel on which *To Live* was based, is not symbolic but rather just a way for the character Fugui to make a living, through their repeated appearance in the film the puppets come to indicate the fragile but tenacious hold on life that the characters have (ibid.: 26–7).

In another way, however, *To Live* turns on its head the ideological workings of the Communist Party throughout most of the twentieth century. As Tani Barlow has shown, one primary movement of the Party was to take away the family, or *jia*, as the locus of authority and the context through which the individual subject is formed, and re-inscribe that focus onto the state, or *guo*. In the early twentieth century and throughout the Communist Party's reign, loyalties once invoked for family and kin were assigned to the state; the Cultural Revolution model of betraying one's own parents in the name of statist ideologies showed the success of this movement. *To Live* is an epic melodrama that refocuses the viewer's attention first at the level of family, and recreates the *family* as a site of strength and personal fulfilment. The second traditional relationship privileged is that of *friend*.

Of course the average educated western viewer will not know this history, and will interpret the emphasis on family and friends in different ways. First, this emphasis on traditionally humanistic values could appear as a welcome bid to join with the general Western Enlightenment ideologies that sustain organisations like Amnesty International, the Red Cross, and the human rights movement. Further interpretations depend on local political culture; in America, any promotion of family falls in line with the cultural right's delineation of *family values*, or the nuclear family with a male head.

To Live re-establishes many traditional familial, social, and gender categories as valid and life-sustaining interpretative strategies for those wishing to recoup the Maoist years, and makes use of conventional narrative and filmic structures.⁸ First is the initial and

ironic setting up of the father as the head of the family, ironic because rather than being a clear-cut figure of authority, Fugui (played by Ge You) is an inept, undirected man. The story is more the father's than the mother's, and we see his life as he goes off to war and through experience creates lasting bonds of friendship, while hers is invisible until he returns. The primary family relationship is the marriage of Fugui and Jiazhen (played by Gong Li) and the unit they create with their two children, daughter Fengxia and son Youqing. The primary friend relationship is that of Fugui and Chunsheng (played by Guo Tao), who first is an unwillingly conscripted war buddy and then the government official who accidentally kills Youqing with his vehicle. The film quickly puts Jiazhen into the traditional category of 'virtuous wife and good mother' (*xianqi liangmu*), allowing Fugui the freedom first to make a mess of things while she sustains the family, and then to redeem himself through labour.

The family lives through trial after trial of difficulties, and the message seems to be a simple one: it lives on, the people within the family live on, and this – not the political superstructure – is the reality of lived experience. The bungling father reunites the family but also makes the two decisions that result in the death of the children. In the first case, he insists that the young Youqing, exhausted by work, attend a politically important event; the child falls asleep and is hit by a truck driven by Chunsheng. The coincidence of Chunsheng, Fugui's wartime buddy who wanted so badly to learn to drive, hitting and killing Youqing, reads directly out of novels and films of the past. Then, when a skilled doctor who can be on hand for the birth of Fengxia's child is located and brought in despite the threatening presence of Red Guards, it is Fugui who lets the doctor be given as many *mantou* as he likes, expanding his stomach to the point where he is incapacitated and cannot help when Fengxia miscarries and dies.

The film presents a different picture than the national allegories that have come out of the work of many Fifth Generation directors. Whereas 'national characteristics' are affirmed as perseverance, willingness to live on no matter what, and loyalty to family and friends, the film is not a questioning or critique of Chinese cultural values and collective forms of behaviour.⁹ There is no hint that Jiazhen and Fugui in any way participated in the culture that allowed the civil war or the Cultural Revolution to occur, yet neither do they protest or resist. Rather, they are its semi-unwilling participants and, as time goes on, its victims.

According to Zhang Yimou, he wanted

... this story to be more character-driven. The film *will* be beautiful, and it *will* use some of the elements I've used before, but those things aren't so important to me now. For example, the shadow-puppet scenes have much less symbolic weight than the red lanterns did! The Fifth Generation directors have a reputation – perhaps not entirely undeserved – for making a big thing of traditional Chinese arts, but here the shadow-puppets are simply the way Fugui makes a living, nothing more. I want the audience to be more interested in the puppet-play narrator than in the play he's narrating. The content of the plays is not of great importance. (Rayns 1994: 17)

What Zhang liked about Yu Hua's novel was that it 'describes how ordinary people survive tragedies and surmount obstacles when all they want is to live simple, normal lives. What really attracted me was the way he pinpointed their attitude to life' (ibid.). In particular, Zhang wants to produce a special quality that he believes is unique to the Chinese: the attitude of just taking what comes and living on.¹⁰ In the film, this quality is concentrated in Fugui, the slightly goofy and basically benign man whose life is the centre of the narrative.

To promote a vision of simple, normal family life, the film constructs Fugui as more 'fatherlike' than does Yu Hua's novel on which it was based. Wang Bin describes Zhang Yimou's collaboration with Yu Hua – famous for his depiction of the most dysfunctional family in contemporary literature in the novella *Xianshi yizhong* (*One Kind of Reality*) – who wrote three versions of the screenplay before being asked to turn the writing over to the screenwriter Lu Wei (Wang Bin 1994: 44). At that point, the film started to increasingly deviate from the novel, resulting in protests from Yu Hua, who felt the novel's basic approach was altered (ibid.: 19–21, 25, 39–40, 52). The initial scenes in the novel take place in a brothel that also is a gambling house, and the narrator Fugui describes his relationships with prostitutes, particularly having sex with a heavy prostitute who later is the one who carries him around on her back through the town. When Jiazhen visits the brothel to beg him to return home, in the novel she kneels before him and he kicks and beats her. In the film, Fugui has been transformed from a violent and extremely sexist man into a somewhat charming loser.

Jiazhen also becomes more motherlike in the film, taking the two children off with her when she sees how hopeless Fugui is, and going

to work filling water bottles so she can support the two children and perform the traditional daughter-in-law duty of caring for her mother-in-law. In the novel, she is ceremoniously removed by her father, who leaves daughter Fengxia to Fugui and his mother. Jiazhen returns six months after her child is born and helps Fugui work the five *mou* of land he has purchased from Longer. Zhang Yimou recognises the 'virtuous wife and good mother' persona he has selected for Gong Li, but also tries to construct more scenes with her at the centre as a concession to the commercialisation of the market, and instils a strength and backbone that he believes is not necessarily there in the traditional concept (*ibid.*: 24, 62, 66, 74).

Although Zhang Yimou rejected striking symbolic images like the red lanterns, he invented the puppets and utilised them in somewhat the same way. The puppets represent the desire to live; they are passive, fragile, and several times almost destroyed, but when motivated and directed contain and express the semblance of life. Compared with his three previous 'red' films, however, *To Live* does bring into play a different aesthetics that not so much eschews symbolic weight as attempts to use traditional Chinese filmic codes to weight human emotions. Compared with the semi-documentary *Qiuju da guansi* (*Qiuju Goes to Court*), *To Live*, like *Hong gaoliang* (*Red Sorghum*) or *Da hong denglong gaogao gua* (*Raise High the Red Lanterns*) appears highly composed and structured. Violence and terror, as in the scenes of the two children's deaths, is expressed through conventional melodramatic methods of close-ups of suffering faces and excessive crying. Thus the film's structured feeling arises not from aesthetic symbolism or a modern sense of terror, but from the recreation of traditional ideologies, filmic techniques, and narrative conventions.

At the same time, the presence of Gong Li, and some languishing shots of her standing with her children or gazing off sadly are both reminiscent of the aestheticising and eroticising camera of *Red Lanterns* and are a gesture toward the artistic unity of the Fifth Generation directors' approach. Whereas Ge You was chosen for his unusual and somewhat vulgar face, Gong Li was chosen because she is an international star known for her beauty and portrayal of strong but victimised, quite eroticised women. The ordinariness on which Zhang Yimou hopes to focus is embodied in the character Fugui, and the character of Jiazhen, which is built up in terms of scenes and appearances (*ibid.*: 21), is both a recognition and utilisation of the commercial value of the actress, and a recreation of the most conventional traditionalism.

Gong Li's character, and the way it produces gender meaning within the film, gives us a good opportunity to evaluate Bourdieu's use of the field and habitus to describe cultural production. The commercial value to which Zhang Yimou refers (*ibid.*: 21) exists not in the domestic market, which cannot fund his productions, but among international film viewers. When he chooses 'Gong Li, of course' (*ibid.*: 31) to play Jiazhen, Zhang is playing to these viewers and their financial support. Yet modelling Gong Li's character on the virtuous wife and good mother paradigm speaks directly to the Chinese domestic audience, proposing for them a female representative that equates simplicity and goodness with this familial role model from the pre-Communist past. Thus Gong Li takes on the double and two-faced function of assisting the film enter the global film world as a modern and beautiful production, and reinstating traditional gender hierarchy within China. Ge You, playing the ordinary man Fugui, refers directly to this odd combination when he comments:

Ge You mumbled 'Uh,' and looked at me: 'Why does Gong Li have so few scenes?'

I finally got it, and said 'For this film Yimou has said over and over that the male protagonist will be playing the main part.'

On Ge You's face was a mysterious look, inflected by a tiny smile: 'I bet that will change.' (*ibid.*: 32)

Ge You, being an insider to the film industry, understands the economic value that more scenes with Gong Li will have; this code of understanding, however, would not be as obvious to someone not in touch with the international film scene. Since the economic value of the film resides in its international backing and audience, it makes perfect sense to cast the one actress known outside China (for her sexy and vulnerable roles) as the heroine; she will gain attention and the film will be viewed in art houses, thus gaining artistic recognition. Not only is the formal and informal training different for interpretation of the film, but the entire habitus is recognised and manipulated depending on the audience. We can say, therefore, that the Gong Li character in this film is split, playing equally to those in China who imagine the relatively traditional gender concepts of female self-sacrifice and silence as an alternative to socialist gender construction, and to those outside who desire an eroticised female from another culture.¹¹

In her discussion of the film *Wanzhu* (The trouble-shooters), which is based on a novel by the popular writer Wang Shuo, Esther

C.M. Yau analyses the use of vernacular and crude language to “‘contaminate” legitimate registrars of language’ that include expressions of intellect, discipline, and even more, Party sayings and political speech, which persist in ironic rather than sacred usage (Yau 1993: 102–3). In a similar way although *To Live* is highly aestheticised, it also proposes a displacement of the grandiose political but in terms of re-conceptualising the past rather than constructing the present. In this historical bent, *To Live* is consistent with the Fifth Generation directors’ general avoidance of contemporary society and overwhelming tendency to rewrite the twentieth century of China. The film inverts the Communist narrative of an overarching structure of politics and culture under which human stories take place, instead bringing forward and occupying the screen with human emotions and faces, glances and tears, to the extent that they appear to reclaim space once thought of as political. While as in the past, all human stories take place under an uncontrollable political umbrella, they are enlarged to the point where the political recedes, if not in ultimate importance, at least in terms of interest and the creation of desire.

Neither Jiazhen nor Fugui have any political understanding or ambition, but merely wish to live unproblematically, as parents loving and supporting their children – although in Fugui’s case, only after his consciousness is altered by adversity does he care for anyone other than himself. Because *To Live* makes use of traditional narrative conventions such as coincidence, and Chinese filmic techniques such as the highlighting of emotion and expression of traumas of death and separation by close-up sobbing and crying, it promotes a nostalgic approach to society that implies that the entire level of political struggle can and should be displaced by something more simple, also from the past. Within this vision, the political is bracketed and set off as a particular kind of experience that is deadly to those who actively participate (Chunsheng) and to those who do not. *To Live* implies not so much that the past is too political, but that a change of perspective can turn the overly politicised past into an acceptable human story. Rather than cultural critique, the film uses displacement of the political – in particular political passion – to shift the meaning of the Maoist years toward a more humanistic narrative.

Zhang’s earlier ‘red’ films are all about ordinary people, but they revolve around extraordinary events and pressures, and concern people with access to resources and wealth. In the case of *Red Sorghum*, the context is the war against the Japanese and the sorghum

winery; for *Judou*, it is the sexual abuse of a wealthy household; and for *Raise High the Red Lanterns*, it is the sexual hierarchy and ritualistic, demeaning structure of another wealthy family. In *To Live*, the household almost instantly loses its wealth, reducing it to the lowest common denominator, and most of the film's action takes place in this arena. Furthermore, more historical time passes in *To Live*, as the director cuts short the initial scenes and moves episodically through history.

Yet while Zhang Yimou does shift his focus away from the symbolic allegory contained in *Red Sorghum*'s fighting for the nation, and in the deep cultural critique of *Judou* and *Raise High the Red Lanterns*, he continues to place the gesture toward the future on the male protagonist, a practice from his previous 'red' films.¹² For the female characters played by Gong Li, the roles available are erotic and dangerous woman, or good wife and female mother, and her actions and character are determined by her relationships with men. Just as in Zhang's previous films, the Gong Li character is not allowed to take the position of one moving out toward national strength, in *To Live* this role, now recast as the take-what-comes attitude of the commoner, is assigned to the male. Only Ge You's character of Fugui embodies what Zhang Yimou believes to be a national characteristic:

What Yimou was most affected by was the feeling that came from how in (the novel) *To Live*, the protagonist Fugui, after experiencing anxiety and catastrophe, in a calm and unperturbed way led the old ox away. He felt this was a characteristic that only the Chinese had, of 'don't worry much about debt, no blame and no hatred,' an open, unperturbed life view. (Wang Bin 1994: 18-19)

While the quality of 'unperturbedness' (*huoda*), a neither bad nor good ability to just live on (ibid.: 24), may not be a positive and active life quality, it adequately illustrates Zhang's belief that 'fate' cannot be avoided, and that the Chinese people went willingly into devastating political movements:

In this discussion of the screenplay, Zhang Yimou repeated his attitude toward the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution. He believed that at the time, people willingly threw themselves into these two great movements. In the past, whenever our films touched on these eras they ignored this point. He said, in *To Live* naturally we must figure out how to

treat the background of these two great eras. He thought we should thoroughly oppose the consistent approach of the Fifth Generation: placing priorities on constructing a large model, explaining things, and using a literati flavour. Rather, we should allow the main topic to float out naturally from real life expressions. (ibid.: 44)

Despite Zhang Yimou's attempt to change his approach in *To Live*, the film's identification of a national characteristic, the historical framework, and the large political events that are the background of something else called 'life' would gain Zhang Yiwu's label of 'allegory'. Clearly Zhang Yimou has tried to shift from a more grand, more political registrar to one of ordinariness; how should we interpret this shift? First, as I have tried to illustrate above, the film contains 'hidden' gender meanings that capitalise on traditional female values. In another interpretation, Zhang Yiwu sees the film as a pseudo-historical romance imbued with false consciousness:

In Chen Kaige's *Bawang bieji* (*Farewell my Concubine*) and Zhang Yimou's newest film *To Live*, that extraordinary love is expressed along with the process of Chinese history for the past decades, and presented as a kind of symbol of contemporariness, turning into some sort of code of resistance that exists without any falseness. It is precisely in relying on this kind of pure-hearted code of ideological consciousness that they once again put into effect an identification with and belonging to Western discourse. Those political movements that so stir your emotions in *To Live* clearly are not a sincere investigation into Chinese history, but are merely one more fulfilment of advanced capitalistic hegemony's desire and illusion . . . and the prize *To Live* received at Cannes is nothing but a barren cultural revenge toward those of use who live in Chinese cultural language. That this sort of script, a stilted living political tale, can be considered a masterful representative of Chinese film must be thought of as a laughable Beckettesque play. (Zhang 1994a: 8)

While it surely is true that neither *Farewell My Concubine* nor *To Live* are investigations into Chinese history, and also that they have been made at least partially with a Western audience in mind, does it then follow that they are *only* pandering to Western audiences, prizes, and ideologies?¹³ People who lived through the largest and grandest

political movement – the Cultural Revolution – and who grew up when culture was thought of and represented in terms of such political movements, may believe that this kind of presentation does indeed catch what daily life was, and to some extent is, all about. Like the character played by Gong Li, the film contains at least two faces, one directed toward a certain reality of Chinese life, and the other looking out toward international prizes and resources – the conditions of Third-World culture itself.¹⁴

Bourdieu's methodology, and the concepts of *field* and *habitus*, are useful but of limited value in explaining the situation within which Third-World filmmakers work. In film-making and to some extent in all Third-World 'art,' not only is the economic field more important than Bourdieu's method leads us to believe it should be, but furthermore, multiple fields and multiple habituses exist and function contemporaneously and contradictorily. The simplicity and analytical beauty of the one-culture model, so well illustrated in Bourdieu's analysis of Flaubert and his examination of taste within French culture, or in his accounts of the relatively contained cultures of Algeria, are less effective in explaining the complexity of economic issues of foreign investment and domestic support, of audiences, and of domestic and international approaches, images, and concepts. Furthermore, in cultures where the theory of the autonomous aesthetic is pursued by a relatively small number of intellectuals who have accepted this concept from the West and fight against what they believe to be the politicisation of art by the Communist Party – and then are challenged by those such as Zhang Yiwu, who sees Western ideologies establishing themselves through culture – the fields that have emerged to define the arena of possibilities are not as easily pinned down.

Notes

- 1 For an intelligent critique of *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, see Tom Huhn's short review (Huhn 1996). Huhn calls attention to a reductionism in Bourdieu's theory of art: 'it is only after collapsing all distinction between artwork and ideology that Bourdieu is able to "deduce" the "aesthetic" of the former, for what he sees "inscribed" in it is nothing but the latter' (ibid.: 88). In showing that Bourdieu's analysis of Flaubert 'works' because Flaubert's work is treated as an embodiment of the world he portrays, Huhn also illustrates the tautological nature of Bourdieu's approach: the best works because it is the best.

- 2 While it is not the topic of this paper, it may be worthwhile to consider how criticism and critique affects cultural production in different countries. In the United States, those who produce culture often do not read academic papers analysing their works, but in China, where there is a closer relationship between writers, artists, filmmakers and critics, and the concept and practice of the autonomous aesthetic are less formally developed, the former often are very much aware of critique. As I mention below, Zhang Yimou knows that his films have been criticised as colonialist and exotic, and tries to avoid these 'errors' in his new film. The problem, therefore, is not just the loss of 'magic', but also that critics who use Bourdieu's methodology situate themselves outside their own culture, taking a position of mastery above those who are 'merely' writing fiction and poetry, painting and carving, and making films.
- 3 While I find it difficult to regard China, with its wealth of textual and artistic traditions, highly developed sciences and educational system, large-scale civil service organisation and bureaucracy, and recent socialist past, as a typical Third-World country, economically it is so.
- 4 See my article 'The Concubine and the Figure of History: Chen Kaige's Farewell My Concubine' (Larson 1997), for a discussion of cultural identity and how reviewers inevitably approach Chinese films as representative of culture and history.
- 5 The Fifth Generation directors are those who graduated in the fifth class of the Beijing Film Academy. They are the first group to work largely after the death of Mao, and their innovations mark the switch out of Maoist socialist realism, the attempt to enter the international film market, and a general and severe questioning of Chinese film-making techniques, contents, aesthetics, and institutional structures. They are the first group to become internationally known, create wealthy stars, win prestigious awards abroad, gain international financial backing, and have their films shown in art houses throughout the West.
- 6 Moi carefully points out that perhaps Bourdieu's one true contribution to feminist theory is the statement that 'men . . . are socialised to take games seriously' (Moi 1991: 1031).
- 7 Zhang Yimou considered making a film based on Yu Hua's story 'Hebian de cuowu' ('Mistake on the Riverbank'), but rejected the idea first because Jiang Wen could not play the main part, and second because he felt it was too colonialist and Western in approach. See Wang Bin 1994: 9–10.
- 8 For an elaboration of these traditional techniques, see Yuejin Wang 1989. The codes include understatement in emotional rhetoric, exploration of emotional subtlety, indulgence in faint sadness, and the evocation of familiar lyrical motives from traditional poetics, as well as lyricising about departure, absence, and memory (37–8). I believe we also could add wailing and sobbing at death, and in general throughout a film, a profusion of crying.
- 9 See Yau 1993. Yau comments that in *Red Sorghum*, 'the national spirit, presented as warped, serves as a critical term to rewrite experience and beliefs' (p. 97). By contrast, *To Live* presents the national spirit as resilient and superior not because it can accomplish tremendous things, but because it can take what comes and go on.

- 10 Wang Bin repeatedly refers to this quality in his book, and emphasises Zhang Yimou's desire to see it come out in the character of Fugui; see especially p. 24.
- 11 Zhang Yimou gives the character Jiazhen scenes with action, but little talking, making use of the traditional notion that women should be silent. See Wang Bin 1994: 40-1.
- 12 See Larson 1995. I analyse Zhang's films to show how he produces a triangular structure in which a man passes through erotic engagement with a woman – who dies or goes insane – to live on and work for, or move toward, national salvation.
- 13 See Larson 1997 for an analysis of the concept of history in Chen Kaige's film. While I agree with Zhang Yiwu that the film does not seriously work with the notion of history, but presents it panoramically, I also analyse it as containing knowledge about its own split inner/outer, domestic/foreign perspective, and as presenting this condition as that of Chinese culture in the global economy.
- 14 To push the question farther along, does Zhang Yiwu's preference for films without the grand narratives represent a more serious displacing of the political, which in the past 50 years has been the official 'story' of the Chinese people, and a privileging of the present Dengist moment of entrepreneurship and development? Could we regard the locally oriented Sixth Generation films as a cultural apparatus of capitalism as it takes hold in domestic Chinese culture and captures the imagination and consciousness of the people, now floating in the air, so true in its depiction of 'daily life' that its economic ideology is forgotten?

Here, There, Anywhere

Networking by Young Chinese Writers Today

Claire Huot

Introduction

Flaubert wrote in 1867:

We [writers] are 'luxury workers'; yet nobody is rich enough to pay us. When one wants to earn a living with one's pen, one must turn to journalism, serialized novels or theatre plays. (Quoted in Bourdieu 1992: 122)

This realistic statement on the difficulty of making a living as a writer could have been echoed by Chinese writers of the turn of the last century who possibly felt a similar predicament.

The question of the autonomy of art is however altogether different now, in the 1990s. One hundred or so years later, the problem is more complex in the socialist yet capitalistically-oriented country, China. Chinese writers now are finding ways to earn a comfortable (*xiao kang*) living. If they are institutionalised writers – and most of them are – they can already make a living as a writer, a situation which only prevails in socialist countries. But, a professional artist's salary is nowadays inadequate for the high cost of living, especially for the young writers' lifestyles which may include anything from playing tennis, to owning a portable computer or even an apartment. Consequently, these young 'luxury workers' from China do opt for Flaubert's prescription, that is they find venues outside of their 'pure' (free) trade. Most do write journalistic pieces, television serials, film scripts and the like.

But popular prose (some say 'prostitution work') is not the only strategy used by China's young writers today since economic capital

is not the sole goal. Another is what Bourdieu has called 'symbolic capital', prestige or recognition which he considers in direct opposition to economic success. Again, China's actual situation does not fit in such an analysis of the cultural field. Having 'capital' or being successful means enjoying both economic and symbolic good fortune. In other words, there may be relative political autonomy of the arts, but all forms of art production in China are definitely bound to the economic and social order.

And how must we then understand the following statement by Bourdieu: 'Writing abolishes the determinations, constraints and limits which are constitutive of social existence' (ibid.: 53)? Does it merely designate an abstract sense of freedom?

True, young Chinese artists of today talk in terms of individuality. If you ask any writer (in China) where he (this is mainly a male phenomenon)¹ situates himself in the literary field, he will scoff at the question, deny that he belongs to any literary group or school, insist that he is a free writer and, on occasion, may claim to be the best Chinese writer of his day, sometimes of this century.

But, if you question him a little further, he will also talk about reality (*xianshi*), the reality of Chinese society and how his work is totally engaged, fraught with it. He will insist on his concern for Chinese domestic issues and criticise the prevalent colonial frame of mind.

Indeed, writing in China is not easy: it is burdened by practicality, by forms, associations and institutions, which control, praise and condemn; it is also muddled by the fact that it has become a commodity, in both the domestic and foreign arena. The predicament now for Chinese writers is manifold: how to manage a working lifestyle which preserves their individuality, oversteps social, everyday constraints, and earns them a comfortable living in mainland China while begetting due recognition.

This chapter traces the available networks in which young Chinese mainland writers operate today. Success, both economic and symbolic, would seem to require participation in all spheres. A case example, that of the poet Yu Jian, concludes the chapter.

The emerging autonomous cultural field in China

Bourdieu claims that France's autonomous literary field emerged around 1880, when the literary order presented itself as an economic world in reverse and as at odds with the political order. If this statement

can at all be applied to China's situation, then this field is emerging now (end of the 1980s and especially 1990s) because the actual cultural production has indeed reached a relative degree of independence from the state. It has its own logic and its own power structure.

It would seem that cultural production pays no heed to political prescriptions. This is most obvious since June 4, 1989, after which political authorities refashioned worn-out political slogans and heroes, and kicked out progressive figures such as culture minister Wang Meng, himself considered an avant-garde writer. For the artists, adhesion to these slogans has been out of the question. They have been sticking to their work more fiercely than ever and all authority figures, including those in the artistic field, have lost their credibility. Scepticism and often cynicism have become virtues.

Yet, cultural production is at times in full step with the actual political guidelines which emphasise economic growth, personal and national wealth. The old masses – workers, peasants and soldiers – are of no concern, it would seem, to the artists; the new masses are the white-collar workers and the supply-demand rationale is accordingly fitted.

Today, to read a recent work such as *Modern Chinese Writers Self-Portrayals* (Martin and Kinkley 1992) is to fathom the breach between the 1980s and the 1990s. Very little of this account of the Chinese writers' situation up to 1990 is still valid. Jeffrey Kinkley's 'Overview: Chinese Writers on Writing' is symptomatic of the purist and dramatic outlook of the 1980s: 'political treachery' [. . .] 'social cowardice' [. . .] 'universal concerns' [. . .] the 'resentment of the power of editors', the 'fear of getting into a rut and of failing to serve the "needs" of readers' [. . .] 'buffeted by raw commercial pressures', and so on.

In both Kinkley's article and main editor Helmut Martin's 'Retrospective Introduction: Enforced Silence or Emigré Uncertainties: Options for Chinese Writers After a Decade of Experiments and Growths', the élite status and the sense of mission of the intelligentsia are also discussed, the writer still being the leading figure in the arts. Martin writes: '[As usual], the treatment of writers remain[s] symptomatic for the treatment of all Chinese intellectuals.' (ibid.: xxii) Yet, one can sense that these intellectuals, then a synonym for writers, are considered the upcoming endangered species:

[. . .] in the middle of the 1980s, there were increasing signs of a problematic change in the function of contemporary literature

in Chinese society [...] specialist public [...] suddenly dwindling audience [...] 'pure' art [...] flood of cheap entertainment fiction. (ibid.: xxxiii-iv)

In the 1990s, the writers are definitely not the cultural helmsmen. The performing artists are now the vanguard as concerns the fate of Chinese artists. Literature is definitely surpassed by other media, primarily the visual, and in first rank, television. Martin's introduction pointed at this commercial turn of art, but he used, like the Chinese critics then, terms of crisis to describe it.

Now, in the 1990s, the writers bear no such onus nor do they have scruples: they, the young ones, are almost fearless. They deal with personal concerns, do not particularly worry about local readership, and some unashamedly make a pretty comfortable living with popular art while ensconcing themselves in their 'serious' work.

Nowadays, the literary field must be acknowledged as an integral part (but certainly not in the forefront) of the artistic field which has its own topsy-turvy economy. There is an unprecedented (textual) circulation, even complicity, between the arts and they all 'experiment' with/at the edges of societal institutions, both commercial and political.

China's avant-garde (*xianfeng*) cultural production holds this peculiar stand, a precarious equilibrium between forces. It is interesting to note that critics (Jiang Yuanlun 1994; Hao Fang 1994) discuss the *ganga* (uncomfortable, uneasy) position the avant-garde holds *vis-à-vis* popular taste and consumer art. Jiang even says that popular taste, a product of consumer society, is now replacing the avant-garde. Paradoxically, the avant-garde has become the defender of art, of thought, of individuality, of the independence of art; it refuses the interference of money in art and positions itself against popular taste.² It has become not only the site of opposition to politics but also of resistance to popular taste. Jiang concludes by stating that the avant-garde cannot but hold this small space, during an era of consumerism. As for Hao, he notes that in the 'West', Dali, Warhol, the New York subway graffiti artists and rock stars, as representatives of the avant-garde, have all linked commercial success with their anti-consumerist art. He reminds the Chinese reader that Warhol once said: 'Making money is the supreme art'. Hao links money-making and art as a condition of the postmodern age. He concludes that perhaps the (Chinese) avant-garde today is a money-making avant-garde.

One could further this picture by adding that the avant-garde often operates on residues, such as slogans or posters from the Great Cultural Revolution which it recycles into new values (incidentally bringing its producers fame and fortune), which are then recuperated and endlessly reproduced by mass pop culture. Concomitantly, the Chinese avant-garde is following, albeit in a weird fashion, Jiang Zemin's call to 'link up with the world' (*jiégui*).

Their spokespersons, such as the above mentioned Jiang and Hao, have contributed to this alignment with the 'world'. In the 1994 collection *Jinri xianfeng* (*Today's Avant-garde*)³ dealing with what's happening in all cultural domains, from architecture to performing arts to literature, it is striking to notice the number of comparisons made between the Chinese situation now and avant-gardes from other countries in former decades. For example, Li Xianting compares Chinese political pop with the Soviet case; Hao Fang, as mentioned above, the economic condition with American rock music and Western painters; the writers Ge Fei and Yu Hua, respectively, with Robbe-Grillet and Faulkner.

Critic Zhang Yiwu, in his contribution to *Today's Avant-garde*, entitled 'Xin shiji de shengyin' ('The Voice of a New Era') (Zhang 1994b), takes this cross-cultural disposition one step further by claiming that China, a Third-World nation at the beginning of the market economy, no longer views itself as the 'Other of the West'. I think that such a statement is partly wishful thinking and displays the active participation of critics in the ideological shaping of the avant-garde. Certainly, an outsider would never claim that China's avant-garde is not eager to behold the international eye. The mere insistence on their professed detachment from international recognition is a sufficient counterexample.

Nevertheless, Zhang Yiwu does point at an interesting area of investigation when he speaks of the emergence of a 'Han-language culture' (*Hanyu wenhua*). This designates the rapprochement between mandarin speakers of China, Taiwan, Hong Kong and the diaspora in the 1990s, via cable TV, Internet and such new modes of telecommunication. For Zhang, it also implies a conscious focusing of Han speakers on their own cultural heritage, again a part of his post-colonial thesis. He offers as examples of such marketable goods Wang Shuo's novellas, Jia Pingwa's novel *Feidu* (*The Abandoned City*) and Zhang Yimou and Chen Kaige's films. The first two fall into the category of what he terms 'Han-language culture' because they are local phenomena, of interest to its 'members'; the second two are

characteristic of the spectacle of the 'Han-language culture' offered to the Western world.

I cannot totally agree with such a stand that could with little effort be represented as a black-and-white picture of the 'good' ones and the 'bad' ones, the nationalists and the traitors. I believe all avant-garde art now produced in China is hauled into both domestic and international markets, as much as it must deal with politics and economics.

What is more, the dividing line here is between literature and visual arts. But, through translation and other mediations, literature can also access the world. Language may no longer be considered (re)liable, it may not have to attempt to explain the world, but it can certainly participate in it. Because of the changes in the economy (towards a market economy), ideology and official cultural discourse have indeed gone from 'hard' to 'soft'; (local) media discourse is now mainstream discourse and it has superseded the intellectuals' voice and official discourse. However reduced the space of the 'intellectuals'/writers may be, the cultural field now has a number of potential loci in space and time in which their works can circulate.

Four networks for literary 'success'

Bourdieu's analysis of the genesis and structure of the literary field in France can be a starting point to discern constants in any culture, including the Chinese one. For example, he states that there are two main mediations in the literary field: (1) the market (the literary industry); (2) long-term relationships (based on similar lifestyles or system of values) (Bourdieu 1992: 78). That when the literary and cultural fields become autonomous, correlatively there is a transformation between the world of art and literature, and the political world (Bourdieu 1992: 84); that the upside down world which is the literary and cultural field emerges from a cultural revolution. (Bourdieu 1992: 90)

However, Bourdieu's analysis has as its object a definite historical time, the end of the nineteenth century (the rise of the bourgeoisie during a time of thriving colonialism, rapid industrialisation and urbanisation, a time of profound changes in social structures) in a nation-state, France.

The literary and artistic field constitutes itself as such by opposition to the 'bourgeois' world which brutally affirms its values and pretends to control the instruments of legitimation

and [. . .] attempts through its press and its penpushers to impose a degraded and degrading definition of cultural production. [. . .] this regime of parvenus without culture, [. . .] the credit given by the crowds to the most mediocre literary works, those works which all of press vehicle and celebrate, the vulgar materialism of the new masters of the economy, the sycophantic servility of the great majority of writers and artists, contributed more than a little to further the rupture with the ordinary world which is inseparable from the constitution of the world of art as a world apart, as an empire within an empire. (Bourdieu 1992: 90)

Again, the difference between the situation of France, 'the empire' and China, a century later, in the midst of (post)colonialism is great. But, in a way, one can replace the term 'bourgeois' with 'post-Tiananmen cultural apparatus' and with 'consumerist mass culture'; the 'ordinary world' is 'the masses', the socialist ones, but also popular masses. Still, this cannot account for the present cultural field in China which is highly complex also because of its ambiguous disposition towards financial well-being, as mentioned earlier. What is more, present-day China is at once a nation-state, part of the Han-language 'culture', and also within the 'global village.' Its culture is anything but 'a world apart', an 'empire within an empire'.

I find that the Chinese literary field today, for a young, (male), avant-garde writer, constitutes at least four spheres of activity, each having its own chronotope:

- 1 the national literary institutional world;
- 2 the local artistic community;
- 3 the transnational cultural industry;
- 4 the multinational cultural industry.

These 'worlds' are neither discontinuous nor do they merge with each other; a literary work or a writer moves from one to another, travels. To use another of Bourdieu's terms, these are possible 'trajectories'. It would seem that most 'successful' writers do evolve in all of them, at some point.

The national literary institutional world (all-China)

If you are not an émigré writer, this connection is vital since it is *the* channel for the publication and distribution of national literature in

mainland China. The traditional 'literary' field is a political institution comprised of the writers' and critics' associations, the literary periodicals, the state-owned publishing houses, conferences and debates around new publications, the awards and press coverage and academia. It is also the clearing house for the censors, be they governmental, of the publishing house, or of the local writers' association.

In this world, the avant-garde writer is identified as 'experimental', 'incomprehensible' (*kanbudong*) when compared to the establishment which will co-opt him. His attitude is confrontational since he has to face the managing authorities which blame or praise, ban or publish. He is necessarily positioned in a binary bind: marginal vs. mainstream, novice vs. consecrated, heretic vs. orthodox, young vs. old. In this literary arena the work has to compete with other literary works, traditional and/or commercial. This is where alliances and factions are formed between critics, journalists, and writers. For example, *Shouhuo*, *Shiyue*, *Dangdai*, *Huacheng* and *Zhongshan* remain coveted literary journals for all, but are now being won over by the young writers. *Dajia* is almost strictly for avant-garde literature, but still bears the mark of (self) censorship, since it is like all former periodicals within the institutional system. Wang Shuo, the most famous writer who is not a member of a writers' association but who has been published in these official prestigious journals, must nevertheless go through the editorial circuit. Most, if not all, writers need a little help from older, established figures to find a voice, or more literally a space in the domestic literary world.⁴ Bribing is current in this sphere, and almost no one will write a piece on your work if a nice perquisite is not subtly in the offing.

This connection assures local readership; for example, Jia Pingwa's *The Abandoned City* was first published in *Shiyue* in very small print and passed on from one university student to another, before it sold as a book on the market for some 20 yuan. Although there are commercial presses nowadays, almost all works are first published in state-controlled magazines. That is part of the Chinese publishing game.

In this domestic sphere, you have an address (and a computer)⁵ and live anywhere in China, but are most of the time a member of a writers' association. Su Tong is a member of the Jiangsu Writers' Association and also (nominally) editor of *Zhongshan*; Liu Zhenyun is a member of the All-China Writers' Association and also (nominally) editor of an agricultural journal. Your earnings, a meagre salary, are insufficient, unless a new commercial publishing house turns your

work into a bestseller. But this professional allegiance means that you have a work unit, and therefore a place to stay for pennies.

Kinkley's statement still stands true, if one omits the term in italics: 'In the PRC, publication is an initiation into a *moral* elite that is carefully managed by the people's government, its publishing houses, its writers' association, and its censors.' (Martin and Kinkley 1992: xix)

The local artistic community (mainly Beijing)

If the first 'community' is eminently political and of a coercive nature, this second national community is wholly based on affinities. It is a dialogic community made up of members from different artistic domains who work together and appraise each other's works as peers. This community entertains a relation of structural homology with the field of power, with which it is at odds. It is a cultural circuit in which literary products interact with other artistic/cultural products, namely film, television, music and theatre to create 'live' media works. Novelists Mo Yan, Liu Heng and Yu Hua, to name but a few, have collaborated both in writing television scripts and in adapting their own novels for film productions.

This artistic community is nevertheless a closed circuit which deals strictly with its own crowd, which shares a similar 'bohemian' lifestyle away from assigned work units and designated cities. It is a mixture of painters, performance artists, rock musicians, writers, television, film or video producers, critics. It is a small world with its own anarchic ways, with no direct determination from economic and political conditions. It is this second sphere which comes closest to Bourdieu's concept of an autonomous cultural field, with its 'natural' affiliations and 'production-for-fellow producers'. (Bourdieu 1992: 90ff). Success, political or commercial, is not a reference. In this most exclusive connection, the audience is the smallest, but the most select and prized by the members.

Here, you also need a phone, often have a beeper and a portable phone, and, if you don't live in Beijing, you must come sporadically to the capital. Mo Yan travels to and from Gaomi county, Shandong province and Beijing; Yu Hua moved permanently to Beijing from Haixian county, Zhejiang province. If you have made it to Beijing, you are very much part of the avant-garde clique because no free apartment is waiting for you there. A few writers with this affiliation become occasional travelers, once co-opted by a theatre group, a television project, or other performing art happening.⁶

The transnational cultural industry (Taiwan and Hong Kong)

From the strictly literary community, yet more often from participating both in the literary and artistic communities, a writer can move into the linguistically-determined, non-political world of other Chinese-speaking areas, such as Hong Kong and Taiwan. This transnational operation consists in the (re)printing of a writer's work (in full-form characters) for the non-mainlanders. It yields international renown and also better emoluments.

In Taiwan, the Yuanliu and Maitian publishing houses covet mainland writers who are in the vanguard and whose works have been adapted into films. Ye Zhaoyan, Yu Hua, Su Tong, Ge Fei, Mo Yan – again, to name but a few – have all been reprinted there. Yu Jian has been published in the literary journal *Lianhe* (*Unitas*). In Hong Kong, periodicals such as *Jiushi niandai* (*The Nineties*) and *Jintian* (*Today*) are of importance, though without the privileged status they had in the 1980s and early 1990s. Helmut Martin noted then that Western scholars' understanding of China mainly came from reading secondary Hong Kong journals (Martin and Kinkley 1992: 116). Martin stressed the importance of being reprinted outside of China, using A Cheng as an example:

Once [his] stories were published in Hong Kong, everyone began to discuss them. Furthermore, several Chinese writers introduced [his] work [while they were abroad]. So [A Cheng] became popular overseas first from the Hong Kong magazines, and second, through word-of-mouth recommendations of other writers. These are our main avenues of approach. (p. 116)

The most prominent authors from the PRC have been reprinted on Taiwan only since 1987–88. (p. xxxix) [When A Cheng's *King of Chess* was] reprinted in Taiwan, [it] proved instrumental in making contemporary mainland literature acceptable to readers there. (p. 106)

This transnational sphere is most certainly not a community but a league, a mark of distinction for select writers. It is a negotiation between individual Chinese writers, living or not on the mainland, with agents living outside China who are searching for 'mainland Chinese talent'. A Cheng is an émigré writer living in the USA who does not participate in the local literary scene, and less and less in its artistic scene. Ge Fei teaches literature in Shanghai and is as yet an outsider to the Beijing artistic community. Here the address is totally

irrelevant. The writers are nevertheless transformed into representatives of new 'mainland' literary trends. What, in the local literary scene, was antagonistically presented as the counterpoint to mainstream, consecrated, orthodox literature, is valued outside of its context for its 'dissidence' and 'novelty'.

In exchange, a writer's production acquires a greater economic value because the author's fee is far higher than on the mainland; moreover, a more diversified potential readership opens up, leading to more possibilities. This avenue is also current for academics and freelance critics whose meagre means cannot feed them; they use this 'Han-language' connection to provide themselves with a better lifestyle but also to make their works known outside of the mainland.

The multinational cultural industry (mainly Western Europe, North America and Japan)

This connection often, but not necessarily, depends on the operations transacted either in the transnational business or in the artistic cliques. Because those mainland writers who have dealt with Hong Kong or Taiwan publishers have sold off their rights, foreign publishing houses need to go through these intermediaries in order to translate mainland writers' works. Once their works have been published in 'accessible' channels, they can be known to foreigners (non-Han community members), outside of greater 'China'.

In this sphere, the same comments as in the transnational cultural industry apply: individual authors, not a trend or a school count, their works once translated are read differently, readership is widened and diversified. The authors become 'Chinese' and their works, the representatives of contemporary Chinese literature. There is definitely a certain belatedness involved. What is read is not necessarily what is being read at the same time in China; Han Shaogong, for example who has had at least four novels translated into French, but who, in China, is now better known as an essayist.⁷ Often, China's political background unqualifiedly provides the terms of reference, or else the works are pitifully judged according to European literatures which become the 'influences' for the 'emerging' (in this case, underdeveloped) Chinese literature.

Here, you have a bank account in hard foreign currency, you (often) have a passport (and will probably travel abroad). Such are the privileges of translation or adaptation (as into a play, for Liu Zhenyun and Yu Jian). Han Shaogong was invited to France by the

French Ministry of Culture; Yu Hua, by the Saint-Malo Great Travellers' Book Fair, Mo Yan by German, French and American cultural programmes. The latter three writers have had at least one work adapted to the silver screen. It is no coincidence, because the second sphere, the artistic community, plays a decisive role in the selection of works to be translated for capitalist countries where supply meets a demand created by, in this case, blockbusters such as Zhang Yimou's films.

In conclusion, the idea of success, both economic and symbolic, for a mainland writer involves mobility of his works, an ability to move into all spheres, the local scenes and the supra-national ones. Such are the coveted positions which some writers of the Chinese literary field succeed in alternatively occupying.

The 'successful' poet Yu Jian

According to Bourdieu, the strategies of cultural producers are distributed between two limits which are, in fact, never reached: total and cynical subordination to demand, and absolute independence from the market and its requirements. This is capitalist logic. For China, one must superimpose a socialist frame, in order to complete the picture: a certain subordination to literary institutions and a relative independence from political and institutionalised authority.

For me, Yu Jian's case is a beautiful illustration of the networks in which a Chinese writer can operate. I admit that his profile is extreme: Yu Jian lives in far-away Yunnan and he writes, of all things, poetry! But my liking for his frankness and his unswerving integrity, inseparable from his tough and direct discourse, makes me select him as a representative of 'success' amongst young, male, avant-garde Chinese writers today.

Yu Jian, born in 1954, lives in Kunming, is a member of the Yunnan Writers' Association and works as an editor for the periodical *Yunnan wenyi pinglun*. He therefore lives in an apartment which belongs to the Association and earns a (modest) salary. In China, he has published two poetry books. In 1989, his first collection, simply entitled *Shi liushi shou* (61 Poems), was published by a related work unit, the Yunnan People's Publishing House. It contains poems from 1980 to 1987 and a foreword by Yu Jian of which the following is an excerpt:

I believe that what is important is still to be a real human being.
[. . .] To live with some sense of reality, with some naturalness,

to live a bit relaxed. [One should first] live, become a human being, then write a few things. I only believe in the world in which my body is. (Yu 1989: 1)

Actually, Yu Jian's poetry was circulating long before that in official poetry periodicals, and also in non-official channels. For example, some poems were published in the foremost poetry periodical of China, *Shikan*, in 1986; others were published all through the 1980s in the underground periodical *Tamen* (*Them*) which he co-founded with two other poets in 1984 and is still in operation. Thus, one can say that, on the national literary scene, by the mid-1980s, Yu Jian had made his mark, for the official classification, as the representative of the 'Third Generation' poets and, for the underground, as an avant-garde poet.

In 1993, a second collection of poems entitled *Dui yizhi wuya de mingming* (*Naming to a Crow*⁸) was published also in a local Yunnan publishing house, this time called International Culture (*Guoji wenhua*). It includes the following poem, written in 1987:

December 31, 1987

Evening news: drugs stock market
American-Russian conference car races cancer
Thousands and thousands of Blacks walk on the USA
A letter's content: life is boring
A kitchen's conversation: the neighbour's scarf
The last day of the lunar year around a round table China is
eating and drinking
At that moment I walk along a rain-lit road
Get to a wooded area step into a puddle
Shoes totally wet tree leaves shining in the dark
It is not that I am loftier than them simply that I have this
happening
Away from home and unable to get back in time

(Yu 1993: 66)

This poem is spatially ambiguous, but tersely timed. The displacements of the 'I' are however real, his body is the focus for both space and time.

Since this local publication – with exquisitely hard-edged illustrations by fellow Kunming artist Mao Xuhui – Yu Jian has, somewhat accidentally, moved on into the Beijing avant-garde scene

and into multiple spaces. In 1993, while sojourning in the capital, he would often attend, with video artist Wu Wenguang, (also from Kunming but now residing in Beijing) experimental theatre director Mou Sen's rehearsals and once proposed to make his play more experimental by inserting interferences in the original text.⁹ Based on Gao Xingjian's *Bi'an* (*The Other Bank*), Yu Jian wrote 'Guanyu *Bi'an* de yihui Hanyu cixing taolun' ('A Chinese Grammatical Discussion on *The Other Bank*') (Yu 1994b), which became the play Mou staged. The 'one-act poetic play' simply subverted and superseded the original play, thus becoming China's first theatre experiment in deconstruction. Yu's play emptied Gao's work of its dramatic metaphysical content:

What are we doing standing here?
 We're going to go to the other bank.
 What's the other bank?
 The other bank? It's a word, it's the name of a play.
 What kind of play?
 'The Other Bank'. At this very moment, on this very spot, we're acting this play.
 What kind of word is the other bank?
 It's a name.
 How does one write it?
 It's two characters, 16 strokes, [. . .] bi bi bi bi – an an an an
 – 'bi- an' [. . .]

(Yu 1994b: 65–6)

The play was performed for one week in February of 1993 in a classroom at the Beijing Film Institute. It was an incredible success, in terms of symbolic capital for both Mou Sen and Yu Jian. The audience was select: avant-garde artists¹⁰ and critics, and some (also young) sympathetic foreigners. No publicity other than word-of-mouth was given to the event, which, however, took on immense proportions in the aftermath.

A symposium followed the 'Other Bank' show. It was filmed by Jiang Yue who produced a documentary on the play and its long-term effects, entitled *The Other Bank* (1995). The symposium participants were all ecstatic about the performance: Dai Jinhua, feminist professor of film and literary theory then at the Beijing Film Institute, stated she had in her 11 years at the Institute never seen anything as powerful as *The Other Bank*; it forced her into critical introspection.

Independent video artist Wu Wenguang spoke of the same feeling in terms of being 'stripped off'. Postmodern critic Zhang Yiwu heralded it as the beginning of a new culture, the end of a long-lasting myth on the 'other bank', (i.e. the longing for the First World) which began with the May 4th (1919) literary movement; and other such bright, young, progressive, independent-minded people. A great number of critical appraisals, all ecstatic, were written on Mou Sen and Yu Jian, including publications in the Taiwanese avant-garde art periodical *Yishu chaoliu* (*Art Trends*).

Since *The Other Bank*, Mou Sen and Yu Jian's fortunes have been partially intertwined. Mou Sen has become *the* representative of Chinese experimental theatre both at home and abroad. He has found in Yu Jian's work and person a co-worker, a comrade. Yu Jian has contributed more than once, and in various ways, to Mou's performances. Undoubtedly, the most famous of Mou's plays is *Ling dang'an* (*File 0*) (1994) which toured the world: it is based on Yu Jian's poem of the same name. Actually, the poem is the pulse of the play. It is the recorded message which interrupts the actor Wu Wenguang's monologue:

File 0: The Archives Room

Fifth floor of the building a padlock and behind the padlock
in a secret room his file stored in a file drawer it is the
proof that he is a person separated from him by two floors
he works on the second floor this box separated from him by
50 metres

30 steps a room unlike the others in reinforced concrete
on six sides 3 doors no windows 1 fluorescent lamp
4 red fire extinguishers 200 square metres more than 1000
locks [. . .]

(Yu 1994c: 48)

This long poem which has no authorial voice is a terse account of life in China under the constant supervision of, for lack of a better term, Big Brother. It tells of being brought into the world with a file already in one's name, of growing up and knowing that the file gets thicker all the time, of becoming sexually aware in a forever dark and heavy atmosphere, of being an old man at the age of 30, of leading a scribbler's life filled with forms to fill out forever. The file is everything, it is kept secret, always updated, forever out of reach.

Yu Jian's poem 'File O', initially written in 1992, was published in 1994 in the first issue of the foremost avant-garde literary journal, *Dajia* (*Great Master*) (also based in Kunming). Yu was asked to make two changes: one, to remove a line taken from one of Mao Zedong's poems; two, to change a date, 1969. Yu made both changes.

In the meantime, his name and poetry had reached Taiwan; he won the first prize in the 14th *Lianhe* (*Unitas*) New Poetry Award. Articles about his work, especially 'A Chinese Grammatical Discussion. . .' and 'File O' blossomed into all the avant-garde periodicals, from mainland, Hong Kong and Taiwan. Rising stars such as the young critic He Yi wrote about his work, the painter Ding Fang, the video artist Wu Wenguang and the postmodern critic Zhang Yiwu. In Europe and North America, small cultural magazines and mainstream press all covered Mou Sen's play and at least mentioned the name of the poet, Yu Jian.

With 'File O', Yu Jian was (rightly) consecrated as a fully fledged avant-garde representative. He has even performed twice in Mou Sen's plays: in *Yu aizi youguan* (*Related to Aids*) (performed in Beijing in late 1995) and in *Guanyu yige yewan de huiyi* (*Recollection About an Evening*) (performed in Paris in autumn 1995). He is also writing and publishing in Taiwan, on topics such as experimental theatre, poetry, contemporary culture, the avant-garde, always with a reference to the actual Chinese context and with an exacerbated sense of self-reflexivity.

Yu Jian still writes many poems. Some are as yet unpublished; some are being published in China's various periodicals, both of the high-brow kind and plain photocopied journals. He has just completed an album of 18 'paintings' on Yunnan's natural scenery. A book of critical works from 1992 to 1996, entitled *Zongpi shouji* (*Brown Cover Notes*) was due to come out, at the end of 1996, in a Shanghai publishing house. It contains texts written on disease, housing, trains, ecology, poetry, postmodernism, and one particular text on Kunming and Paris.¹¹ He is still working at his assigned work unit, is not planning to live in Beijing and certainly not abroad.

In conclusion, Yu Jian's work has acquired mobility in all four spheres: national literary and avant-garde community, transnational and multinational cultural industry. He himself has a computer and a telephone and travels to Beijing and to Europe. What matters is that his poetic mode of operation, regardless of genre and of topic, remains fiercely intact. I would call it an untaming of the Chinese language. Yu Jian brings it down to a personal, material level, without

gods or buddhas, with the least possible adjectives, with nouns moving, turning into verbs of action. Yu Jian is a writer of action and his works, verbs of action. His works have moved on because there is now a public for them, especially since June 4, 1989, which definitely ended any utopian ideal.

Yu Jian is an extreme case for my demonstration because it must end on a dead-end created precisely by his uncouth use of language. Few of his works (at the most some 15 short poems) have been translated into foreign languages and published (in the USA, The Netherlands, and Germany). And I don't believe that the more Yu Jian makes his mark (a rather vulgar expression), the better his chances will automatically be to be translated abroad. Yu Jian's works are poems, already a rather underpublished genre; his poems are language poetry: who of the non-Han culture can read them? And his poetry is action. When, in 1995 in Paris, Yu Jian performed *Recollection About an Evening*, every night he questioned on stage two different (Chinese) people concerning the eve of June 4, 1989. The questions were never the same, the text moved into a different angle at every performance. The questions would get more and more concrete, pointing to the physical impossibilities of some answers, each time eventually undoing the unofficial discourse on the Tiananmen events as a fabrication of collective speech, without any personal input from intimate experience. Yu claims that the European interpreter could not follow the 'action', nor could the public. A language barrier was definitely at stake there, but also a question of attitude: towards language (any one) and towards avant-garde works that are in the process of emerging and therefore as yet without a frame of reference.

Notes

- 1 Although some young women writers, such as Chen Ran, are now emerging. Chen Ran's 'business' card states: 'Chen Ran, free writer (*ziyou zuojia*)'. Still, networking is mainly done between male comrades.
- 2 For a further discussion of the relationship between authorities, avant-garde and popular literature in contemporary China, see Chapter Six.
- 3 This is the first of a series. By May 1996, four volumes altogether had been published. It can be considered the *Who's Who* of the avant-garde in both who writes in it and who is written in it.
- 4 Wang Shuo is nevertheless a very special case. Rumors have it that he could never have been published in the beginning of the 1980s without Wang Meng's support. Wang Shuo denies this, saying that at the time he

was a nobody, knew nobody and just sent his novellas to famous literary magazines, such as *Dangdai* (personal meeting, March 27 1996).

- 5 Notable exceptions are Su Tong, a prolific writer, who writes by hand and almost without crossing out a word (personal meeting, April 1994); and Liu Heng, also quite prolific, who makes it almost a patriotic thing to write with Chinese brush and ink and without technical assistance (cf. Chen Zufen 1994).
- 6 An exception to Beijing as the sole cultural centre might be, in a relatively short time, Shanghai, whose artists and writers represent what they call a *linglei* (alternative) art and lifestyle. Most Shanghai writers do not move on to Beijing. An example is experimental novelist Sun Ganlu, who participates in visual productions in Shanghai.
- 7 Whether the very recent publication of an experimental novel entitled *Maqiao cidian* (*Horse Bridge Dictionary*) has re-established Han's reputation as a fiction writer in China could not yet be assessed at this writing.
- 8 English title cited as printed on the book cover.
- 9 I had the immense pleasure of spending a few days with Yu Jian in late April 1996. Parts of this account come from our meetings; but most facts can be found in published form, especially in Yu 1994a.
- 10 Including mega rock star Cui Jian, who was so moved by the performance that he wrote a song entitled 'The Other Bank', which he performed the following night, also in a select environment.
- 11 Without my asking, Yu Jian generously made photocopies for me of his unpublished poems of 1995, his *Shiba fu hua huo wo zai meili de Yunnan* (*Eighteen Paintings or Me in Beautiful Yunnan*) and also of his *Brown Cover Notes*.

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Glossary

A Cheng
 A Ying
 ai
 ai mei di
 Ai Qing
 Badaowan
 Ba Jin
 Bashe
 Bawang bieji
 baifan pai
 baihua
 Baihua shuxin
 baijin zhuyi
 Bainian yijiao
 Bai Wei
 Banyuetan
 Baoshanlu
 Bao Tianxiao
 Beida
 Bei Dao
 Bei Ling
 Benliu
 Bi'an
 bihui
 biming lu
 bianyi suo
 biaoYu pai
 bieji
 bu neng suan wenxue
 Bu suan qingshu
 caizi
 caizi jiaren xiaoshuo
 Can shijie
 Can Xue

阿城
 阿英
 愛
 愛美的
 艾青
 八道灣
 巴金
 跋涉
 霸王別姬
 稗販派
 白話
 白話書信
 拜金主義
 百年一覺
 白薇
 半月談
 寶山路
 包天笑
 北大
 北島
 貝嶺
 奔流
 彼岸
 筆會
 筆名錄
 編譯所
 標語派
 別集
 不能算文學
 不算情書
 才子
 才子佳人小說
 慘世界
 殘雪

Cao Peisheng	曹佩聲
Cao Xueqin	曹雪芹
changben	唱本
changpian xiaoshuo	長篇小說
Chen Duxiu	陳獨秀
Chen Hengzhe	陳衡哲
Chen Kaige	陳凱歌
Chen Maiping	陳邁平
Chen Pingyuan	陳平原
Chen Ran	陳染
Chen Shuyu	陳漱渝
Cheng Fangwu	程仿吾
chidu xiaojian	尺牘小簡
Chu Gou	筌狗
chulian	初戀
Chulian qingshu ji	初戀情書集
Chulian qingshu. Lian'ai zhidao	初戀情書。戀愛指導
chuzhong	初中
Chuan shi mingpian gushi	傳世名篇故事
Chuangzao she	創造社
Chuangzao she chubanbu	創造社出版部
Chuangzao shinian	創造十年
Chuangzao yuekan	創造月刊
Chun de lianshang	春的戀傷
Chunsheng	春生
Chunxueping	春雪瓶
ci	詞
Cong wenxue dao lian'ai	從文學到戀愛
Cui Zhi	崔陟
Da hong denglong gaogao gua	大紅燈籠高高掛
Dajia	大家
Daxue	大學
dayoushi	打油詩
dazhi	達旨
dazhong	大眾
dazhonghua	大眾化
dazhuan	大專
Dai Jinhua	戴錦華
Dangdai	當代
demokelaxi	德謨克拉西
Ding Ling	丁玲
Ding Richang	丁日昌
Dong Cao	冬草
Dongfang zazhi	東方雜誌
Dong Jingsen	董景森
Du Fu	杜甫
Duzhe	讀者

Duzhe julebu	讀者俱樂部
dushenzhuyi	獨身主義
duanpian xiaoshuo	短篇小說
Dui yizhi wuya de mingming	對一只烏鴉的命名
Duoduo	多多
Fan Junchang	範軍昌
Fei Yan	飛雁
Feidu	廢都
feiren de wenxue	非人的文學
fengge	風格
Fenghuayuan	楓花園
Feng Menglong	馮夢龍
Fengxia	鳳霞
Feng Xuefeng	馮雪峰
Fugui	福貴
fukan	副刊
ganga	尷尬
ganshang pai	感傷派
gaofei zhidu	稿費制度
Gao Xingjian	高行健
Gao Yuhan	高語罕
gaozhong	高中
Ge Fei	格非
Geming gushihui	革命故事會
gewei kanguan	各位看官
geyan	格言
Ge You	葛優
gonghua	公話
gongji pai	攻擊派
Gong Li	鞏俐
gongli pai	功利派
Gongren xiaoshi	工人小史
Gu Cheng	顧城
Guan Daru	管達如
Guan Hanqing	關漢卿
Guanyu yige yewan de huiyi	關於一個夜晚的回憶
Guangchang	廣場
Guangxu	光緒
gudong	股東
gugan	骨干
gushi	故事
Gushi chuandi	故事傳遞
Gushi dawang	故事大王
Gushihui	故事會
Gushi jiben lilun ji qi xiezuo jiqiao	故事基本理論及其寫作技巧
Gushijia	故事家
Gushi jie long	故事接龍

Gushilin	故事林
Gushi shijie	故事世界
guilao	鬼佬
guizu wenxue	貴族文學
guo	國
Guo Jialing	郭佳玲
guomin wenxue	國民文學
Guo Moruo	郭沫若
Guo nian	過年
Guo Songtao	郭嵩濤
Guo Tao	郭濤
Guowen baiba ke	國文百八課
guoyu	國語
guoyu de wenxue	國語的文學
Haiwai ji Ni jun	海外寄倪君
Han Dong	韓東
Han Shaogong	韓少功
Hanyu wenhua	漢語文化
Hao Fang	郝舫
Hebian de cuowu	河邊的錯誤
He Chengwei	何承偉
He Jingzhi	賀敬之
Hexin	荷心
He Yi	賀奕
Heinu yutian lu	黑奴籲天錄
Hong gaoliang	紅高粱
Honglou meng	紅樓夢
Hongshui	洪水
Hong Weifa	洪爲法
Hong Ying	虹影
Hou Dejian	候德建
houbei rencai	後備人才
Hubeisheng wenlian	湖北省文聯
Hu Menghua	胡夢華
Hu Shi	胡適
Hu Yepin	胡也頻
Huacheng	花城
Huaqiao	華僑
huashuo	話說
Huaxia wenzhai	華夏文摘
Hua yue hen	花月痕
Huai	淮
Huanzhou	幻洲
Huang Jiagang	黃家剛
Huangting [jing]	黃庭經
Huang Xuanlin	黃宣林
Huang Xuanlin gushiji	黃宣林故事集

Huang Ying	黃鶯
huang zhi jia you fang	皇治家有方
Huang Zhiyuan	黃志遠
Huang Zunxian	黃遵憲
hui	會
Hui de feng	蕙底風
huiyin huida	誨淫誨盜
huoda	豁達
huo wenxue	活文學
Huozhe	活著
jiben duiwu	基本隊伍
Ji Ding Ling	記丁玲
jishi wenxue	紀事文學
jia	家
Jiayin xiaozhuan	迦因小傳
jiagonghui	加工會
jiahua	假話
Jia Pingwa	賈平凹
Jiazhen	家珍
jiankang	健康
jianshang nengli	鑒賞能力
Jiang Baili	蔣百里
Jiang Bin	姜彬
Jiang Dongxiu	江冬秀
Jiang Guangci	蔣光慈
Jianghu qixia zhuan	江湖奇俠傳
Jiangnan gushi dawang	江南故事大王
Jiang Yuanlun	蔣原倫
Jiang Yue	蔣樾
jiayang zidi	教養子弟
jie	節
jiogui	接軌
jindai	近代
jindaihua	近代化
Jin gu chuanqi	今古傳奇
Jin gu chuanqi shi nian	今古傳奇十年
Jin gu chuanqi shi nian jishi	今古傳奇十年紀事
Jingu qiguan	今古奇觀
Jinri xianfeng	今日先鋒
Jinri xianfeng zhi mingyun	今日先鋒之命運
Jin Shengtian	金聖嘆
Jintian	今天
Jin Yong	金庸
Jing Yinyu	敬隱魚
jiuliu	九流
jiupai	舊派
jiu shi jiu ci jiu qu	舊詩舊詞舊曲

Jiushi niandai	九十年代
Jiutouniao	九頭鳥
Jujue Jin Yong	拒絕金庸
Kai Xuan	凱旋
kanbudong	看不懂
kanguan	看官
Kang Baiqing	康白情
Kang Youwei	康有為
kexue xiaoshuo	科學小說
Ke Yicen	柯一岑
Kong Jue	孔厥
kuangre pai	狂熱派
Kuangren riji	狂人日記
Lao She	老舍
Li Bai	李白
libai liu pai de peizi	禮拜六派的胚子
Li Boyuan	李伯元
Li Chuanfeng	李傳鋒
Li Dingyi	李定夷
Li Hongwei	李洪偉
Li Hongzhang	李鴻章
Liji	禮記
Li Li	李笠
Li Liming	李立明
Lisao	離騷
Lishi xiaoshuo	歷史小說
Li Weijian	李唯建
Li Xianting	栗憲庭
Li Yulai	李漁來
Lianhe	聯合
Lianren shujian	戀人書簡
Liangdi congshu	兩地叢書
Liangdi shu	兩地書
Liang ge daxuesheng	兩個大學生
Liang Qichao	梁啟超
Liaozhai zhiyi	聊齋志異
Lin Beili	林北麗
Lin Gengbai	林庚白
Lin Shu	林紓
Lin Ying	林影
Ling dang'an	0檔案
linglei	另類
Ling Yu	凌宇
Liu Bannong	劉半農
Liu Heng	劉恆
liumang	流氓
Liu Suola	劉索拉

liuwang wenxue	流亡文學
Liu Yanling	劉延陵
Liu Zaifu	劉再復
Liu Zhenyun	劉震雲
Lu-Guo-Mao-Ba-Lao-Cao	魯郭茅巴老曹
Lu Jun	盧君
Lu Wei	蘆葦
Lu Xiaoman	陸小曼
Lu Xun	魯迅
Lu Xun quanji	魯迅全集
Lu Yin	廬隱
Lun baihua xiaoshuo	論白話小說
Lun xiaoshuo yu qunzhi zhi guanxi	論小說與群治之關係
Luo Hong	羅洪
Luo Shan	羅珊
Luo Weiyang	羅維揚
Mao Dun	茅盾
Mao Xuhui	毛旭輝
Mao Zedong	毛澤東
Mei Sheng	梅生
Meizhou tongzi wanli xunqin ji	美洲童子萬里尋親記
Meng Demin	孟德民
Meng Yao	孟瑤
Mifeng	蜜蜂
minjian wenhua	民間文化
minjian xushi	民間敘事
Mingren qingjie	名人情結
Mingren zhi lü huiyi congshu	名人之侶回憶叢書
Mo Yan	莫言
Mou Sen	牟森
Muyecha	母夜叉
Nahan	吶喊
nalaizhuyi	拿來主義
neibu	內部
Ni zong you ai wo de yi tian	你總有愛我的一天
Nie Yunlan	聶雲嵐
Nüshen	女神
nüxing wenxue	女性文學
nüxing yanjiu	女性研究
Nüzi shuxin	女子書信
Ou	鷗
Pan Mohua	潘漠華
pianfu	篇幅
pianji pai	偏激派
piaobo	漂泊
pingmin wenxue	平民文學
pingminhua	平民化

Qian Huiying	錢慧英
Qian Xuanton	錢玄同
Qianzi wen	千字文
Qidao	祈禱
Qihei yituan de chubanjie	漆黑一團的出版界
Qixia wuyi	七俠五義
qing	情
Qingchen de fenbie	清晨的分別
qingdiao	情調
qingjie	情節
Qingnian	青年
qingren quanxi	情人關係
Qingshi yi shu	情詩一束
qingshu	情書
Qingshu yi shu	情書一束
Qingxiang	傾向
Qiong Yao	瓊瑤
Qiuju da guansi	秋菊打官司
Qu Shiyong	瞿世英
Qu Yude	屈育德
Quanguo youxiu gushi xuandeng	全國優秀故事選登
queshuo	卻說
relian	熱戀
Ren de wenxue	人的文學
Riben jin sanshi nian xiaoshuo zhi fada	日本近三十年小說之發達
Rulin waishi	儒林外史
Sanguo yanyi	三國演義
san shen	三審
san tuchu	三突出
sanwen	散文
San ye ji	三葉集
Sanzi jing	三字經
Shanghai gongren wenhuagong gushituan	上海工人文化宮故事團
Shanghai wenhua chubanshe	上海文化出版社
Shanghai wenyi chubanshe	上海文藝出版社
Shanghai wenyi zhi yipie	上海文藝之一瞥
Shanghai yinyue chubanshe	上海音樂出版社
Shangwu yinshuguan tushu mulu	商務印書館圖書目錄
Shangwu yinshuguan	商務印書館
she	社
sheyuan	社員
Shen Bao	申報
Shen Congwen	沈從文
shenshenghua	神聖化
Shen Yanbing	沈雁冰
shenghuo kanwu	生活刊物
Shengsi yuan	生死緣

shi	詩
Shiba fu hua huo wo zai meili de Yunnan	十八幅畫或我在美麗的雲南
shijian	識見
shijian zhuozhu, xuewen hongfu	識見卓著，學問宏富
Shijie shuju	世界書局
Shijing	詩經
Shikan	詩刊
Shi Ke	石可
shilian	失戀
Shi liushi shou	詩六十首
Shi Nai'an	施耐庵
shiren	詩人
Shisheng de ai	師生的愛
shisheng guanxi	師生關係
shiwen	詩文
Shiyue	十月
Shouhuo	收穫
shu	書
shuqing	抒情
shuxin	書信
Shuihu	水滸
Shuihu yu Honglou	水滸與紅樓
Shuihu zhuan	水滸傳
Shuo xiaoshuo	說小說
Sibada zhi hun	斯巴達之魂
si da fukan	四大副刊
siheyuan	四合院
sihua	私話
Sima Qian	司馬遷
sixiang quwei	思想趣味
Song Ruoyu	宋若玉
su	俗
Su Shi	蘇軾
Su Tong	蘇童
Su Xuelin	蘇雪林
suibi	隨筆
suibian	隨便
Sun Fuyuan	孫伏園
Sun Ganlu	孫甘露
Tamen	他們
Taidong shuju	泰東書局
Taigong jiajiao	太公家教
Taiping	太平
tanci	彈詞
Tan Zhengbi	譚正璧
Tang Xingtian	唐性天
Tao Yuanming	陶淵明

Tixiao yinyuan	啼笑姻緣
Tian Dawei	田大畏
tianfu yelao	田夫野老
Tian Han	田漢
Tiyan lun	天演論
tingming yu dachen	聽命於大臣
Tingsheng	霆聲
Tongcheng	桐城
tongchou	銅臭
Tongku de xuanze	痛苦的選擇
tongren	同仁
tongren guanxi	同仁關係
tongren zazhi	同仁雜誌
tongsu xiaoshuo	通俗小說
Tongsu xiaoshuo de jiji jiaoxun yu xiaoji jiaoxun	通俗小說的積極教訓與消極教訓
Tongwenguan	同文館
tuifei pai	頽廢派
Waiguo wenxue gushi jianshang	外國文學故事欣賞
Wan Zhi	萬之
Wanzhu	頑主
Wang Bin	王斌
Wang-chi Wong	王宏志
Wang Defen	王德芬
Wang Dehou	王得後
Wang Hui	汪暉
Wang Jingzhi	汪靜之
Wang Shuo	王朔
Wang Xiaoming	王曉明
Wang Yiren	王以仁
Wang Yingxia	王映霞
weihunzhuyi	未婚主義
weimei pai	唯美派
Wei Yiguang	韋義廣
Wei Yuelü	韋月侶
wen	文
wenbi	文筆
wenchang	文娼
wengai	文丐
wenhua pingge	文化品格
Wen Min	雯敏
wenren	文人
wenren wenxue	文人文學
wenren xushi	文人敘事
wentan	文壇
Wenti gushi	問題故事
Wenwu chubanshe	文物出版社

wenxue	文學
Wenxue xunkan	文學旬刊
Wenxue yanjiu hui	文學研究會
Wenxue zhoubao	文學周報
wenyan	文言
Wo yu...	我與……
Wo yu Jiang Guangci	我與蔣光慈
wu	武
Wu Ansun	吳安蓀
Wu Bing'an	烏丙安
Wu Guangjian	伍光健
Wu Jianren	吳趸人
Wu Jingzi	吳敬梓
Wu Jun	吳俊
wuliao	無聊
Wu Lun	吳倫
Wu Meicun	吳美村
Wu Rulun	吳汝綸
Wushi nian lai Zhongguo zhi wenxue	五十年來中國之文學
Wu Shutian	吳曙天
Wu Sihong	吳似鴻
Wu Tenghuang	吳騰凰
Wu Wenchang	吳文昶
Wu Wenguang	吳文光
wuxia	武俠
Wuzhong ren	霧中人
Wu zi de xin	無字的信
Xishi tongsu yanyi	西史通俗演義
Xiyou ji	西游記
Xia Mianzun	夏尊
Xia Zengyou	夏曾佑
Xiandai	現代
Xiandai ming zuojia qingshu xuan	現代名作家情書選
Xiandai qingshu	現代情書
Xiandai zuojia	現代作家
xianfeng	先鋒
xianqi liangmu	賢妻良母
xianqiao pai	纖巧派
xianshi	現實
xianzhi	先知
Xiang Deyan	項德炎
Xiao Hong	蕭紅
xiao huoji	小伙計
Xiao Jun	蕭軍
xiao kang	小康
xiaopinwen	小品文
xiaoshuo	小說

xiaoshuo jie geming
 Xiaoshuo lin
 Xiaoshuo shijie
 Xiaoshuo yuebao
 xiaoxue
 xin
 Xin chao
 Xin ernü yingxiong zhuan
 xinmin
 Xin minzhu zhuyi lun
 Xin qingnian
 Xin shiji de shengyin
 Xin wenxue shiliao
 Xin xiaoshuo
 Xin yusi
 Xinyue she
 Xingshi hengyan
 Xiuxiang xiaoshuo
 Xu Guangping
 Xu Shiyong zhi mi
 Xu Xing
 Xu Zhimo
 Xuantong
 Xue deng
 Xueshi an
 xuewen
 xunshi pai
 ya
 Yan Chunde
 Yan Fu
 yanjiu ziliao
 yanqing xiaoshuo
 Yang Lian
 Yang Meilei
 Yang Sao
 Yang Zilin
 Yao Nailin
 Yao Pengtu
 Ye Shengtao
 yeyu huaqiao
 yiben shiji, yige siheyuan
 Yi ge tongxing'ai de shilianzhe
 yibi
 yibu bianxing
 Yicong
 Yidian xiaoxiao de shengming
 Yihang

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 小說月報
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Zhu Wen (Chapter 7)	朱文
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Zhu Ziqing	朱自清
zhuanji wenxue	傳記文學
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ziyou zuojia	自由作家
Zizhi difang	自治地方
Zong Baihua	宗白華
Zongpi shouji	棕皮手記
zong qi dajiao, bu chu huiyin huidaoliangduan	綜其大較，不出誨淫誨盜兩端
Zui huainian de ren	最懷念的人
zunyan	尊嚴

zuoja cidian
Zuojia xiehui
Zuoye

作家詞典
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